



THE LIBERTY BOYS OF '76

A Weekly Magazine containing Stories of the American Revolution.

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Price 5 Cents.

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By HARRY MOORE.



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The Liberty Boys' Gunners;

OR,

The Bombardment of Monmouth.

By HARRY MOORE.

CHAPTER I.

THE LIBERTY BOYS GO GUNNING.

"General Washington, I have come back to ask a favor of you."

"What is it, Dick?"

"I will tell you, your excellency; you know you have several pieces of artillery along with the army?"

"Yes, Dick."

"Well, what I wish to do is to have myself and Liberty Boys take these pieces of artillery and go across and keep up as constant a firing upon the British as possible."

"While they are marching along, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

General Washington, the commander-in-chief of the patriot armies of America, dropped his head and looked at the floor in a thoughtful manner, while Dick Slater, the handsome young captain of the company of youths known as the Liberty Boys of '76, stood waiting for a decision.

It was the 20th of June, of the year 1778.

The British army under its new commander-in-chief, General Clinton, had evacuated Philadelphia two days before, and was now making its way across New Jersey as rapidly as possible.

The patriot army under General Washington had broken camp at Valley Forge at once and set out after the British. Two days had passed and the chase was becoming a lively one. The whereabouts of the British army was known, and now Dick Slater had come to the commander-in-chief to ask permission to take four pieces of light artillery and go across and hover near the British army and do all the damage possible.

The Liberty Boys were good gunners, having had command of some flying artillery at the battle of Fort Washington, where they had done such good work as earned the approval of General Washington and all who saw it.

Presently the commander-in-chief looked up.

"I am afraid that if I let you do this, Dick, you may get into deep trouble," he said.

"How is that, sir?"

"Well, you boys are so utterly fearless that I am afraid you will take too great chances, and that you will plant your guns and stay too long in one place and thus permit the British to surround and capture you."

"I will give you my promise to be very careful, sir."

Again the commander-in-chief was silent for a few moments.

He seemed to be pondering deeply.

Dick watched him eagerly, yet anxiously. He was afraid that the great man might decide not to let the Liberty Boys take the light artillery and go.

Presently General Washington looked up.

"Dick," he said, "I would not think of giving any one else permission to do what you ask; but I have the utmost confidence in you, and I am going to grant you the privilege to take the four pieces of artillery and go and see what you can do."

"Thank you, sir," said Dick; "I am indeed much obliged to you, and I assure you that we will be very careful and the British will not get a chance to capture us."

"You must exercise all possible care, my boy."

"I will, sir."

"You will take all the Liberty Boys?"

"Yes, sir; I will need them to hold the British back

while we are withdrawing the guns from the scene, after bombarding the enemy."

"True."

After some further talk Dick Slater saluted and withdrew from headquarters.

He went to the place where the Liberty Boys were quartered.

The youths knew where he had been, and what his errand was, and they besieged him with questions.

"What did the commander-in-chief say?"

"Are we to go?"

"Did he say we could have the guns?"

"Tell us what he said, Dick!"

Such were a few of the questions from the lips of the Liberty Boys.

Dick waited until they got through asking questions, and then said, smilingly:

"Yes, we are to go, boys."

"Hurrah!" cried Bob Estabrook, Dick's right hand man, and a lifelong chum and friend; "say, that will be great, Dick."

"Yes; it will be very nice. We will have a chance to bombard the British."

"Yes; we'll worry them all the time and make them wish they had stayed in England."

"Yes! Yes!" in chorus, from several of the youths.

"Are we to have the light artillery, Dick?" asked Mark Morrison.

"Yes."

"All four of the guns?" from Sam Sanderson.

"Yes."

"Good!" from Bob Estabrook; "that is just as we would have things."

The others all said the same.

"When are we to start, Dick?"

"We will start in the morning."

"That is good."

The Liberty Boys talked eagerly, and they told one another what havoc they would play with the redcoats when they got within gunning distance of them.

It was evening, and the patriot army had encamped for the night.

Next morning, soon after breakfast, the Liberty Boys, with the four pieces of artillery, left the encampment and moved away toward the south.

They knew where the British army was, and knew they could reach the vicinity of its line of march by noon.

The youths were mounted, and thus were enabled to get along at a good rate of speed.

They were eager to get a chance at the enemy, and so pushed the horses that were attached to the guns, making them go as rapidly as possible.

About noon they came to the top of a knoll which overlooked the surrounding country.

They came to a stop and took a survey of the country. They felt that the British should be in sight, and such proved to be the case.

Nearly a mile away, down in the valley, the British army was encamped. It was merely a temporary encampment to permit the soldiers to eat dinner and rest awhile.

"There they are!" exclaimed Mark Morrison, who was the first to catch sight of the enemy.

"Hurrah!" exclaimed Bob Estabrook, his eyes glowing with excitement. "Let's give it to them, Dick!"

Dick nodded assent.

"That is what we will do," he said; "I guess we will be able to give them a surprise."

The guns were planted at once, and then, when all was ready, Dick gave the command:

"Fire!"

Boom, boom, boom, boom!

The four guns were discharged, the noise sounding like one long-drawn-out report.

The cannon balls struck within the confines of the British encampment, and several soldiers were killed or wounded.

The British were taken wholly by surprise.

They leaped up and stared about them to see where the shots came from.

All was excitement in the encampment.

They saw the smoke rolling upward from the top of the knoll, and knew that this was where the shots had come from.

General Clinton sent orders for some of the officers to take a force and charge up the slope and make an attack on the force concealed there.

The officers hastened to get started.

Soon a force of at least five hundred was making its way toward the knoll at the swiftest pace possible.

The Liberty Boys saw the movement.

"Fire as quickly as possible!" ordered Dick. "They are coming in too strong a force for us to offer fight."

"Shall we aim the guns at that force that is coming, Dick?" asked Mark Morrison.

"Yes; it offers an excellent mark."

The youths aimed the guns, and when they were ready Dick called out:

"Fire!"

Again the four guns boomed.

The shots were effective, for the missiles went tearing through the ranks of the redcoats, knocking over a number and killing or wounding them.

This caused the British to become almost wild with rage, and they increased their speed and came running up the slope yelling at the top of their voices.

"We had better get away from here," said Dick. "Start with the guns at once, boys, and we will cover your retreat."

The youths who had charge of the guns leaped on to the backs of the horses and started down the hill at as swift a pace as possible, while the other Liberty Boys unslung their muskets and got ready to give the redcoats a warm reception.

"We will give them a volley from the muskets and then a

couple from our pistols," said Dick; "after which we will mount and follow our comrades."

The youths nodded assent.

They cocked their muskets and got ready to take aim as soon as the enemy came within range.

Still yelling angrily, the British came up the slope. They were brandishing their muskets threateningly, and it was evident that they had no thought other than that they would be able to easily get the better of any force they might encounter on top of the knoll.

Closer and closer they came.

Presently they were within musket shot distance, and Dick, having noted that his Liberty Boys were taking careful aim, gave the command:

"Fire, Liberty Boys!"

Instantly a volley rang out.

CHAPTER II.

THE YOUTHS DO GOOD WORK.

The volley from the muskets of the Liberty Boys did good execution.

A score of the redcoats went down, dead and wounded.

With wild yells the others dashed up the slope, firing their muskets as they came.

The bullets fairly rained around the patriots.

They were protected by trees, stones and underbrush, however, a few being wounded slightly only.

"Now with the pistols!" cried Dick. "Give it to them!"

Crash! Roar!

Crash! Roar!

The two volleys rang out, one close on the heels of the other.

The British were close enough now, so that the shots did good execution, and nearly a score went down.

"Mount and away!" cried Dick.

The youth whirled and ran down the slope to where their horses stood.

They leaped into the saddles and dashed off at the top of the horses' speed.

The redcoats reached the top of the knoll just as the Liberty Boys rode away, and they fired a volley from their pistols.

The weapons were not powerful enough, however, the bullets not carrying up.

The Liberty Boys gave utterance to cries of defiance, and waved their hands.

"Down with the king! Long live liberty!" they shouted.

This made the British soldiers almost beside themselves with rage.

They would have given anything, almost, to have been within range, so as to pour a volley into the midst of the flying horsemen. But they were out of range, and had to make the best of the situation.

The redcoats paused on the top of the knoll and gazed after the Liberty Boys.

"What do you think of that, Captain Sharpley?" asked one officer of the other.

"I think those scoundrelly rebels are about the most daring and impudent lot that I have ever seen, Lieutenant Hardy," was the reply.

"There can be no doubt regarding that."

"I wonder who they are—what special force, I mean?" The other shook his head.

"That is more than I could say," he replied.

"I think I can guess who those fellows are," said a soldier, respectfully.

"Ha, say you so, Jarvis?" remarked Lieutenant Hardy; "then tell us."

"Have you ever heard of a company of young fellows who are known as the Liberty Boys of '76?"

The officers started.

"I have," said Lieutenant Hardy.

"And so have I," from Captain Sharpley; "do you think those are the Liberty Boys?"

"That is my guess, sir. From all I have heard about them, they are likely to do just such a thing as this force has done."

The officers looked after the party of horsemen thoughtfully, and nodded their heads in assent.

"I begin to think you are right, Jarvis," from Hardy.

"Quite likely he is," from Captain Sharpley.

"Well, what is to be done?" from Hardy; "shall we return to the encampment and report our failure to inflict damage upon the rebels?"

"There seems to be nothing else for us to do."

"Do you think the rebels will come back and try to bombard us again?"

"I hardly think so. It is my opinion that they simply came over here from the patriot army to strike a blow, as they have done, and then retreat again. I don't think we will see them again."

The other shook his head and looked dubious.

"I don't know about that," he said. "If those fellows really are the Liberty Boys then they are likely to hang on and try to strike us another blow, and another, and still another."

"I don't know but what you are right. Well, we will leave some scouts here on top of the knoll to keep watch, and if they see the rebels coming back they can let us know, and we can get ready to give the rascals a surprise."

"That will be the best plan."

So they named four men who were to remain on the knoll and keep watch for the patriots.

The others went back to the encampment, carrying the dead and wounded along with them.

When the dead had been buried and the wounded attended to the British army broke up and moved away toward the northeast.

The captain reported to General Clinton, and that officer was now in very bad humor.

He seemed to think it a terrible thing that a small force of rebels should station itself on a hill and bombard the British encampment.

He looked upon it as a most insolent thing to do.

Meanwhile the Liberty Boys were not idle.

They were not through with the redcoats yet, by any means.

Indeed, they had only commenced.

Dick Slater was a very shrewd youth.

He would have made a splendid general had he been old enough to hold such high rank.

He had a mind that was capable of taking in the whole situation, and he never failed to take advantage of anything that would be to the advantage of the Liberty Boys.

Dick knew that a watch would be kept for his force, and that it would be impossible to strike the British another blow from the north side.

This being the case, he decided to strike them from the south side, feeling sure that they would not think that they would be in danger from that direction.

To this end he gave orders that they turn eastward, after going a mile north, and they continued in this direction until they had gone three miles. All this time they were sheltered from the view of the British scouts on top of the knoll by the timber, which was quite thick in the locality.

Now Dick gave the order to turn toward the right and go toward the south.

This was done, and when they had gone a mile and a half he gave the command to turn toward the right and go toward the west.

This was done, and the Liberty Boys took up their position on top of a hill that was not quite so high as the one they had been on before, but which was high enough for the purpose.

"Do you think the redcoats will come along the valley, yonder, Dick?" asked Bob.

"Yes," was the reply; "that is the way they will come. It is easy for an army to reach there."

"I judge that you are right."

"I am sure of it."

Dick at once ordered that the artillery be gotten in place.

He superintended the work himself, for he wanted the guns to be placed where they would be the most effective.

Dick had a splendid head for this kind of work. He could look over the ground and see just what could be done that would be to their advantage and to the disadvantage of the enemy.

When the guns had been planted and loaded, and all was in readiness for the coming of the British, the youths fell to talking of the recent encounter with the redcoats.

"We took them by surprise," said one.

"Yes, and we are going to take them by surprise again, eh, Dick?" said Bob.

"I hope so, Bob."

"Oh, I am sure we will; they will not be looking for us on this side of their line of march."

"That is what I am figuring on," said Dick. "I am sure that we will catch them off their guard again."

"Jove, but they will be mad!" said Sam Sanderson, with a chuckle of delight.

"Let them get mad!" said Bob; "that will suit us all right. We will keep at them until they are glad again."

Half an hour passed, and then the advance guard of the British army appeared.

It was a mile away as yet, up the valley.

The youths watched the advancing army as it gradually came into view with a feeling of lively pleasure and excitement.

Their eyes sparkled, and it was plain that they were eager to begin bombarding the British once more.

Closer and closer came the redcoats; slowly but surely, like some huge monster of the serpent family, the marching men moving with such clock-like regularity that it seemed like one thing, instead of being made up of hundreds of individual parts.

On came the British.

When even with the Liberty Boys they would be about half a mile away, and thus would be well within range.

Closer and closer the enemy came, and the advance guard passed and marched onward, followed by the army proper.

Dick now gave the Liberty Boys instructions.

"Be ready to get away with the guns instantly when the order is given," he told the youths who had charge of the horses attached to the limbers.

The youths said they would be ready to get away in a hurry.

Then he told the other youths to be ready to cover the retreat of the youths who had charge of the artillery.

"We will remain and give the redcoats a musket-volley as we did back yonder," he said.

"And a couple of pistol volleys, Dick," said Bob, eagerly. "Let's make it as lively for the redcoats as possible."

"We will see," said Dick. "If circumstances are such as to make it safe we will give them a couple of pistol volleys."

Onward marched the British.

They had no suspicion that their enemies were so near at hand.

Shrewd as was General Clinton, he did not think of such a thing as that the rebels might make an attack from the south. He knew the patriot army was to the northward of his army, and supposed that any attack that came would be from that direction.

He was to be speedily undeceived, however.

Dick Slater saw that the time had come for them to begin work, so he ordered the youths to aim the guns.

This was done.

"Are you ready?" Dick asked.

"Ready," was the reply.

"All right; fire!"

Boom, boom, boom, boom!

The four guns boomed loudly, so close together as

to seem like one long report, and the cannon balls went tearing through the ranks of the soldiers with great effect.

Instantly all was confusion among the British soldiers.

CHAPTER III.

LIVELY WORK.

They had been taken wholly by surprise.

They had not expected to be fired upon at all, much less from that side of the line of march.

"It is that force of Liberty Boys again!" cried Lieutenant Hardy, angrily.

"I think you are right," said Captain Sharpley, who happened to be marching beside him.

Then the order came by an orderly from General Clinton to the effect that they should take a strong force and charge up the hill and put the rebels to rout.

The captain, eager to get another chance at the enemy, hastily got the force under way, and they went dashing up the slope at the best speed of which they were capable.

"They are coming, Dick!" cried Bob.

"Yes, but we will give them another salvo!"

The youths were working at the guns like beavers.

They were swift and sure, these youths. They were as expert as though they had been used to the work all their lives.

The guns were quickly recharged, and then their gunners took aim at the advancing force of redcoats, which numbered at least five hundred soldiers.

When the gunners gave the signal that they were ready Dick called out:

"Fire!"

Boom, boom, boom!

Again the pieces roared.

Right through the ranks of the advancing force went the cannon balls, and on down among the soldiers of the main army.

Thus the missiles did a double service, and many of the redcoats went down, dead and wounded.

With wild yells of rage the British dashed up the hill.

They were determined to capture the daring rebels this time, or at least to inflict some damage upon them.

Dick knew that they would not be able to load and fire the guns again, so he ordered the youths who had charge of them to retreat.

"We will see to it that you have time enough in which to get safely away," he said.

The youths mounted the horses and rode away, dragging the artillery after them, and the rest of the Liberty Boys got ready to receive the enemy.

"Be careful and take good aim!" said Dick. "Make every shot tell."

"We will," said Bob. "Trust us for that."

The youths were eager and excited, but were cool enough so that they would be able to fire with precision. Their excitement was more like enthusiasm, and never interfered with their effectiveness.

Closer and closer came the redcoats.

They were now almost within musket shot distance.

"Get ready," said Dick.

The youths cocked and leveled their muskets.

Then they took careful aim.

Dick eyed the approaching soldiers with a keen and careful gaze.

Presently he decided that the time had come. The British were close enough to make deadly work possible on the part of the Liberty Boys.

"Fire, boys!" Dick cried.

Crash! Roar!

The youths all fired at almost the same instant, and the noise was almost deafening.

The volley was an effective one.

They had taken careful aim, and at least forty of the advancing soldiers went down, dead and wounded.

The Liberty Boys were deadshots, and would have brought down almost as many men as there were bullets but for the fact that in aiming, in many instances two, and sometimes three or four of the youths took aim at the same soldier; and thus the man in question fell, pierced by two or three bullets, when one would have been sufficient for the purpose.

If ever there were angry men in the world it was then. The redcoats were wild with rage.

They gave utterance to yells of anger and to threats regarding what they would do, and came dashing up the slope with renewed energy and speed.

"Kill the rebels!"

"Down with them!"

"Wipe them off the face of the earth!"

"Give them no quarter!"

Such were a few of the cries given utterance to, but the cries and threats did not frighten the Liberty Boys. They were not to be frightened by mere words.

They were old veterans, although young in years.

The redcoats now fired a volley from their muskets.

The Liberty Boys were ensconced behind trees, rocks and bushes, however, and the bullets did not do them much damage.

"Now with the pistols!" cried Dick.

The youths drew their pistols and fired two volleys in quick succession.

Considerable damage was done by these volleys, and then Dick gave the order to retreat and mount.

The youths dashed away, and were on the backs of the horses and riding down the hill at a gallop by the time the British got to the top of the hill.

The youths drew their pistols and fired two volleys in quick succession.

The redcoats sent a couple of volleys after the youths from their pistols, but the majority of the missiles fell short.

There were a couple of companies of troopers along, and these were sent after the patriot force.

"Capture them!" ordered General Clinton; "we must not permit them to remain at liberty, for they are dangerous."

The captain of the company of dragoons said they would do their best.

"We will capture them if such a thing is possible," declared one.

Then they set out and rode as rapidly as possible in the direction of the Liberty Boys.

Dick suspected that some such move would be made by the enemy. He knew there were some companies of troopers along with the British army, and it would be only natural that they should be sent after his force.

He and Bob remained back half a mile behind the force of Liberty Boys to keep watch for the coming of the British dragoons.

He had instructed the youths to get back around on to the north side of the British army, and they moved in such directions as would bring this about.

This threw the British troopers off the track for quite awhile.

They went two or three miles too far south, but by inquiring of the farmers of the locality speedily learned that no force of horsemen had been seen there.

"They have doubled back, Captain Sharpley," said Colonel Holman, who was in command of the force. Sharpley, though a captain of a company of infantry, was so eager to get a chance at the Liberty Boys that he had secured permission to accompany the troopers.

"I judge that you are right, Colonel Holman."

"Yes, and they have likely made a half circuit and gone back to the north side of our army."

"That would seem reasonable. They would want to be on the side their own army is on, and then, if it gets too hot for them, they can retreat in safety."

"Well, we will make them retreat!" grimly.

"I wish we could get a chance at them."

"Perhaps we may be able to do so. You know they have some pieces of artillery, and they can't drag those as fast as we can go on horseback."

"I should think that they would find it a difficult matter to do so."

"Yes, indeed."

They headed in a different direction now, and rode as rapidly as possible.

They were confident the rebels were heading toward the north, so they rode in that direction.

They crossed the line of march of the main army, and Colonel Holman sent a messenger to General Clinton to explain his action in doing this.

The troopers rode onward toward the north two or three miles, and then inquired at a farmhouse if a party of horsemen to the number of about one hundred had gone past there.

The farmer said that he had not seen any such force.

The British officers looked at each other wonderingly and inquiringly.

"Are you sure you are telling the truth?" asked Holman, looking at the man sternly.

"Why, yes, sir," was the reply. "I would have no reason for telling you anything other than the truth."

"It would be a bad thing for you if you were to lie to me."

"I would not think of doing so, sir."

The British officers were puzzled.

They hardly knew what to think.

They felt certain that the force of patriots would be found somewhere in the vicinity, but did not know where to look for it.

"Well, we will have to keep on riding around and searching, I suppose," said Colonel Holman.

"That seems to be the only thing to do," from Captain Sharpley.

They rode first in one direction and then in another, and put in two or three hours at it, but did not get a glimpse of the force they were after.

"Well, this rather beats me," said Holman, at last, when he had called a halt and was discussing the situation with Captain Sharpley.

Suddenly all started, and gave utterance to exclamations.

In the distance, toward the southwest, sounded the roar of cannon.

Boom, boom, boom, boom!

CHAPTER IV.

DICK INTERFERES.

"It's those dastardly Liberty Boys!" cried Captain Sharpley.

"Yes, I guess they are at it again," said Colonel Holman; and then he gave the order to ride in the direction of the firing.

"They have been too smart for us," he said to Captain Sharpley, as they dashed along at a gallop; "the young scoundrels have made almost a complete circuit and have attacked our army from the rear.

"That is just what they have evidently done."

"They are daring fellows."

"Yes, daring and desperate."

"I have always heard that they were desperate fighters."

"There can be no doubt regarding that."

"We must get at them in some manner and put a stop to the work they are doing."

"Yes, indeed; if we can capture them, or if we can even get the artillery away from them, they will be unable to do us any more damage."

"True; if we can get so close upon them that they are forced to abandon the artillery in order to escape then we will be all right."

It was as the two officers had guessed. Dick Slater and his Liberty Boys had made an almost complete circuit of the British army and had approached from the rear, and had planted the guns on top of the hill that had just been passed by the army and had opened fire on the British.

The youths hastened to reload the weapons and another volley was fired before the enemy could get near enough to do any damage, a force of three or four hundred having turned and come running toward the spot from which the shots had come.

The youths mounted their horses and dashed away, dragging the artillery after them at a lively rate of speed, and the rest remained behind and gave the approaching redcoats a volley from their muskets.

They did not wait to fire pistol volleys this time, but mounted their horses and dashed away, for they feared the British troopers might be in the vicinity and come upon them at any moment.

It was well that they did so, for the British troopers did put in an appearance presently, their horses foaming as a result of the manner in which they had been pushed by their riders; but the Liberty Boys were out of sight, and the infantry could only point out the direction the youths had gone.

The troopers at once rode in the direction indicated at the best speed of which their horses were capable.

They kept a sharp lookout, but when they had gone two miles without having seen any signs of the enemy they came to a stop.

"They have doubled on us again," said Colonel Holman.

"That is just what they have done," agreed Captain Sharpley; "but the question is, which way did they go? To the right, or to the left?"

"That is indeed the question," said the other, "and it is a difficult question."

Finally it was decided to divide the force, there being two hundred of the troopers.

"Each force will have as many men as the rebels have in their party," said Colonel Holman; "and one hundred British troopers ought to be good for one hundred rebels any day."

"True," agreed Captain Sharpley, "but those Liberty Boys are out of the ordinary, you know."

"Yes, I know that; but I will engage to thrash them with an equal number of troopers."

"I think it likely you could; still, it would be a good thing, I am sure, if you started in with some advantage on your side."

"Of course I would be glad to have it that way, if possible; but I would not hesitate to engage them on equal terms, or even with the advantage somewhat on their side."

The force was then divided, and one hundred of the troopers went to the right and one hundred to the left. By so doing they hoped to be able to find the force of patriots.

They searched for several hours. The sun went down, and night was coming on and still they had not succeeded

in catching sight of the party of patriots who had given them so much trouble.

"I judge that we may as well give up the search for this time and go back to the main army," said Colonel Holman.

"We may as well do so," said Captain Sharpley, who had remained with the force under Holman.

They turned and rode eastward, and an hour later came to the British encampment.

The other force of troopers had just arrived, and they had been as unsuccessful as was the case with Holman's force. They had not seen anything at all of the rebels.

"Well, that beats anything I have ever heard of," said Captain Sharpley. "Those Liberty Boys are certainly about as slippery fellows as will ever be found."

"Yes, and they are hard ones to get cornered," agreed Colonel Holman.

Then he went to the tent occupied by General Clinton and made his report.

The general was not very well satisfied, but it did no good to be dissatisfied, so he made the best of it.

Meanwhile what of the Liberty Boys?

Dick had reasoned that the redcoat troopers would be after them, and he also figured it out that they would guess that his party had gone either toward the north or toward the south; so he went straight ahead in a westward course until they came to a hill, on top of which they took refuge.

"Now let them come if they want to," said Dick.

"Yes; let them come and we will show them what kind of gunners they are," from Bob.

They watched closely, but no British troopers came in sight.

Dick became convinced at last that the troopers had gone in some other direction, and told his Liberty Boys so.

They agreed with him, and urged him to start after the British once more.

"We'll go in the direction of the British army," said Dick; "but I don't think that we will get there in time to bombard it again this evening."

"Well, we can get located and be ready to do so in the morning," said Bob.

"Yes, so we can."

They set out, then, and rode eastward.

They rode until darkness came on, and then they paused and went into camp.

"Do you think we are near the British encampment, Dick?" asked Bob.

"I should think that we ought to be near it, old fellow," was the reply.

"How are we going to find out?"

"I am going on a reconnoitering tour after we have had something to eat."

"Let me go with you, Dick."

"No; I think I can do all that is necessary. I am not going to try to get near the British encampment, but simply to get it located."

After they had eaten Dick told the youths to keep a sharp lookout and then took his departure.

The youth had gone about a mile when he came to a farmhouse.

There was a light in the house, and he heard boisterous laughter, which seemed to come from the building.

Dick paused and listened a few minutes.

He was sure he heard something that sounded like some one jumping up and down on the floor, and he decided to investigate and learn what was going on.

He entered the yard and advanced to the house.

Approaching the window, he peered in.

He saw a strange sight. In the middle of the floor, dancing in a clumsy manner, was a man dressed after the fashion of the farmers of that region. He was, so Dick thought, the owner of the house. At one side of the room, their backs toward the door, stood two redcoats with pistols in their hands and leveled at the dancer. These two were evidently greatly delighted, for they laughed boisterously. It was their laughter that Dick had heard.

At the farther side of the room stood a woman and a girl of sixteen or seventeen years. They were evidently the wife and daughter of the man who was dancing.

The woman and the girl looked frightened and distressed.

Dick's blood fairly boiled as he gazed upon the scene.

He understood what it meant. The two redcoats had come out on a foraging expedition, had come to this house, had got angry at the man for some reason, and had decided to have some sport with him.

Even had there not been a woman or a girl interested in the affair, Dick would have felt like interfering. But as it was he simply could not help doing so. The look of distress on the faces of the two was sufficient to arouse all the chivalry of the youth's nature.

"Dance, you rebel, dance!" Dick heard one of the redcoats say.

"Yes, keep hon dancing," from the other; "you do hit well, hindeed you do."

"But—I—am tired—out," from the man. "Please let—me—stop."

"Yes, yes; please do," from the woman.

But the two redcoats shook their heads and laughed.

"We couldn't think of doing it, ma'am," said one.

"No, hindeed," from the other.

"We will see about that," thought Dick.

He stepped to the door and tried it.

It was unfastened and opened to his touch.

He pushed the door open, and then drew two pistols and stepped into the house.

The two women and the dancer saw him, but were smart enough not to say anything, Dick having given his head a shake to warn them to keep silent.

The two redcoats had not discovered that an intruder was present, their backs being toward the door; and they kept on laughing at the dancer, utterly unconscious that they were being threatened.

Seeing that he could do so in safety, Dick took the

time to close the door, and when he had done this, he said, in a stern and commanding voice:

"Drop those pistols, you ruffians!"

The two redcoats whirled, giving utterance to exclamations of amazement and fear and found themselves staring in the muzzles of two pistols.

CHAPTER V.

THE TABLES TURNED—TWICE.

"W-what d-does this m-mean?" stammered one.

"Yes, w-who har you?" from the other.

"It means that your fun is to come to a sudden end, that is all," said Dick, calmly; "drop your pistols!"

The farmer had stopped dancing and was mopping the perspiration from his face with his handkerchief, while the woman and the girl were staring at Dick with looks of excitement and delight.

The two redcoats hesitated.

They eyed Dick closely, and he knew what they were thinking as well as though they had put it in words. They were asking themselves whether the youth really was dangerous.

"I mean just what I say," he said, coldly; "if you don't drop those pistols, I'll drop you—take your choice."

"But they are likely to go off if we drop them," said one of the redcoats.

"Yes, hindeed," from the other.

"Then stoop down and place the pistols on the floor."

The two hesitated a few moments, but they noticed a peculiar look which came into the eyes of the young stranger; also a tightening of the muscles of the face, and a squaring of the jaws that made them understand that they had encountered one who would not hesitate to shoot.

They leaned forward and placed the pistols on the floor.

"Now the others," said Dick; "you each have two pistols."

Reluctantly the two drew the pistols out of their belts and placed them on the floor.

"Now, sir, kindly step forward and take charge of the weapons," said Dick, addressing the man who had been dancing.

"With the greatest pleasure!" said the man, and he stepped forward and secured the pistols.

"You'll be sorry for this!" growled one of the redcoats.

"So you will, 'pon my word," from the other.

"Don't threaten," said Dick, coldly. "It is a waste of breath, I assure you, for you can't frighten me at all."

"Who are you?"

"That's no business of yours."

"Oh, it isn't eh?"

"No; now I will ask you a few questions. First, why

have you been acting in the manner that you have toward this man?" nodding toward the farmer.

"He's a rebel," was the sullen reply.

"And I suppose you think that because a man is a patriot and believes that he ought to be free and not have to pay tribute to a king he has never seen and never wants to see, he should be insulted and made to do things for the amusement of the king's soldiers?"

"I don't know why we should answer any questions from you," growled the redcoat who seemed to be the leader.

"Well, I know why you should," said Dick. "I have you at my mercy, and if I should take a notion to put bullets through you I could do it. You had better answer any questions I may ask and do it promptly."

"I'll answer no more questions," said the leader, sullenly.

"Hand neither will Hi," from the other.

Dick was silent, eyeing the two speculatively.

"How long had you been dancing, sir?" he asked presently, addressing the farmer.

"Quite awhile," was the reply. "Half an hour, I should say."

"Yes, all of that," from the woman.

The girl did not say anything, but she was watching Dick with eager, admiring eyes.

"It seems to me more like three hours," said the man, with a smile.

"I don't doubt it," said Dick; "well, since these two men seem to have a liking for dancing, I think it will be the proper thing for them to favor us with some specimens of their work; don't you think so, sir? And you, ladies?"

"Yes; make them dance!" cried the man, eagerly.

"Yes, yes!" from the girl, and she clapped her hands and showed her teeth in a delighted smile.

The woman said nothing; it was evident she was afraid there might be trouble if Dick attempted to make the two dance.

Dick did not anticipate having any trouble, however.

He had the advantage all on his side.

He held the two covered by the pistols, and they were helpless and at his mercy. If they believed he would shoot if they refused to obey his commands they would do as he told them. But, of course, if they thought he would be afraid to shoot, then he could not enforce his commands.

"Very well; we will have some dancing from the two ruffians," said Dick. He looked at the two sternly, and said, in a grim, threatening voice:

"Get to work, both of you! Dance!"

The two looked at Dick and realized that he was in earnest.

Groans escaped their lips.

"I can't dance," said one.

"Neither can Hi," from the other.

"Oh, I know better than that," said Dick. "Men who take so much interest in dancing as to force a man to

dance for their amusement must know a whole lot about it themselves. You will favor us with some fancy steps. Get to work!"

"But I really can't dance!" from one.

"Hit's the same with me," from the other.

"You can and must dance!"

Dick's voice was stern and imperative. His air was that of one who meant what he said.

The two glared at him and then looked at each other. The looks were mute questions as to whether they should obey the command.

"I guess we'll have to do as he says," growled the leader, his face dark with rage; "but I'll tell you this, young fellow," he went on, "if I live, I will get even with you."

"Hand so will I!" from the other.

"Dance!" from Dick, in a stern voice.

With only partially suppressed groans the two began dancing.

It was evident that they were not skilled in the terpsichorean art.

They were clumsy, and their dancing was about as graceful as that of a trick bear, but it answered the purpose. It was not grace and skill that Dick was after; but action on the part of the two.

"Good!" he cried, sarcastically. "Fine! I have never seen any dancing like it, never!"

And this was literally true. It was about the worst attempt at dancing the youth had ever seen.

The farmer was well pleased, and he nodded his head and smiled in a self-satisfied manner.

"You two will understand how I felt," he said; "serves you right."

"So it does," said Dick.

The woman looked sober, but the girl's face was smiling, and it was evidently all she could do to keep from laughing outright.

"Haven't we danced enough?" asked the leader of the two, with a sullen look.

"No, indeed; you have just begun," said Dick.

"Surely you don't mean it," fiercely.

"Certainly I do."

"But I am getting tired. I won't be able to keep this up a minute longer."

"Hand neither will I!" from the other.

"My dear sirs," said Dick, suavely; "you will find that you are capable of doing a great deal more than you think possible. I have every confidence that you will be able to keep this up for half an hour, at least."

A groan escaped the lips of the two in concert.

"I can never do it," from one.

"Hand neither can Hi," from the other.

"You will have to do it," calmly, "so just make up your mind to that, and save your wind. You will need it!"

"And you will need all yours to run with when this thing is ended and we are free to act as we like," growled the leader.

Dick laughed.

"Do you think so?" he asked, calmly.

"Yes."

"You are mistaken, I assure you," the youth said. "I have run from ten or a dozen redcoats on different occasions—yes, and from as few as half a dozen; but never yet have I run from two, at least not for fear of having an encounter with them."

"You must be very brave!" sneeringly.

"Oh, no! It doesn't require very great bravery to enable one to stand up against two such fellows as you."

This made the two more angry than ever, and they glared at the bold youth in a manner that would have been sufficient to frighten one less fearless than Dick.

The dancing continued steadily—that is to say, the two redcoats kept on leaping and jumping about. There was not much dancing about it.

They were beginning to get tired. They panted and perspired at a great rate.

The farmer and his daughter were evidently enjoying the exhibition, but the woman was not. She looked pale and worried. It was evident that she feared trouble would come out of the affair.

"Haven't we danced long enough?" asked the leader.

"Oh, no; not half long enough," said Dick.

"Keep them at it as long as they did me," said the man.

"Yes, yes!" from the girl.

"That is what I am going to do," said Dick. "They are not going to get off so easily as they think for."

"I'll get even with you if I have to put in a year at the task," said the leader, savagely.

"Hand so will Hi!" from the other.

"You are at liberty to try," said Dick. "I think that you will find me always ready for you, no matter when or how you may come at me."

"Bah! You think that because you have the advantage now, and are making us dance here to please you, you can do as you please under any and all circumstances; but you will find your mistake later on."

"Perhaps so."

"There is no 'perhaps' about it."

"No; there is no 'perhaps' about hit," from the other.

"You are at it again," said Dick, coolly.

"At what?"

"Wasting breath."

The girl laughed, and this caused the redcoats to get almost as red in the face as the color of their coats. They glared angrily at the girl.

To the leader Dick said:

"You think you are smart, don't you?"

"Oh, no," was the reply. "I am simply telling you the truth, that is all."

The two showed signs of wishing to discontinue dancing. They slowed up in their leaping and jumping, but Dick shook his pistols, and the redcoats were suddenly taken with a desire, seemingly, to dance with great enthusiasm and energy. There was no doubt regarding the matter—they were afraid of the youth.

"That is better," said Dick. "You are doing splendidly now. Just keep it up."

At this moment the door flew open and four redcoats strode into the room with drawn and leveled pistols. Of course the pistols were leveled at Dick.

"Throw up your hands and surrender, young fellow!" cried the leader of the four, who wore the uniform of a lieutenant; "if you attempt to resist or use those pistols I will shoot you dead! Surrender!"

CHAPTER VI.

ESTHER INTERFERES.

The face of the farmer fell, and he looked alarmed and disconcerted.

The woman gave utterance to a little cry of fear, and she turned paler than ever.

The girl said nothing, but it was evident that she was disappointed and disconcerted by the turn affairs had taken.

Dick was perhaps the coolest and calmest person in the room. He did not seem to be disconcerted or frightened, but looked into the muzzles of the pistols without winking, and then surveyed their owners keenly.

The two redcoats who had been dancing at the point of Dick's pistols stopped dancing instantly and gave utterance to cries of satisfaction.

"Ha! Things are turning our way now!" cried the leader, his face lighting up with savage joy.

"Yes; we will now make the rebel dawnce, don't you know!" from the other.

Then they turned upon the farmer fiercely and demanded their pistols.

"Give us our pistols, and do it quickly!" from the leader.

"Yes; give us our pistols!"

The man did so, for he realized that the less he did to anger the redcoats the better it would be for him.

The two seized their weapons, thrust one in their belts and held the other in the hand, ready for use.

"What is the trouble here, anyway?" asked the lieutenant, glancing at the leader of the two.

"I'll tell you, lieutenant," was the reply; "we were having some fun with this old rebel farmer—making him dance, when this young scoundrel," glaring fiercely at Dick, "came in and made us give up our weapons, after which he made us dance, as you saw."

"Yes, I saw it," drily; "I would like to see the man that could make me dance—that is, when I had a comrade and we were two to the other fellow's one."

"But this fellow is dangerous," said the leader of the two; "he—look out! He'll get away!"

Dick had made a sudden attempt to escape.

He took advantage of the moment when the two were talking and had their attention on each other, and leaped

forward and struck the pistol arms of the two nearest redcoats aside.

He would have got through the doorway in safety, and might then have escaped, but one of the fellows tripped him, and he fell to the floor with a crash, his pistols going off.

One of the bullets hit a redcoat in the calf of his leg, causing him to give utterance to a yell and go hopping around the room. The other paid no attention to him, however, but leaped upon Dick before he could rise.

They speedily bound his arms together behind his back, and then they jerked him to his feet.

"Ha, now we have you tight and fast, you scoundrelly rebel!" cried the leader of the two Dick had made dance.

"Yes, so we 'ave," from the other.

"Let's make him dance, lieutenant," said the first speaker, his eyes glowing with a vicious and eager light.

"Very well, Johnson; we will make him dance. I shall enjoy it myself."

"I don't think you will," said Dick.

"Why not?" eyeing the youth keenly and questioningly.

"Because—I am not going to dance."

This was said quietly, but with a determined tone and air.

The lieutenant laughed.

"Oh, I guess you will," he said, and he shook the pistol significantly.

"You will find that you are mistaken."

There was something so calmly confident in the tone of the youth that the lieutenant gave him a searching look. Then he assumed a fierce expression of countenance and said, sternly:

"Dance!"

Dick did not move.

The redcoats all glared angrily.

As one man they raised their pistols and covered the Liberty Boy.

Dick shook his head.

"I will not," he said.

"You will dance or die!"

The lieutenant made his voice as stern and threatening as possible, but if he thought to intimidate the youth he quickly found his mistake.

"It is useless to give any more orders," said Dick. "I will not dance and that is all there is to be said about the matter."

"Won't you dance to save your life?" the lieutenant asked.

"No."

"You are a fool."

"Not at all."

The lieutenant looked searchingly at Dick. The fellow who had clamored for an exhibition of dancing by Dick, fearing the officer would not force matters, said:

"Don't let him off, lieutenant; make him dance, or kill him!"

"I will," grimly; "have no fears on that score. Then he said, sternly:

"For the last time, I command you to dance."

"You might as well let it be the last time," said Dick, calmly. "You might stand there and keep on commanding all night, and I would not obey. I absolutely and utterly refuse to dance; so go ahead with the alternative. I am ready for it!"

"Let's shoot him, lieutenant!" cried the one who was so eager for revenge on Dick.

"Let's 'ang 'im!" from the Cockney. "Then he'll dawnce, don't you know."

The lieutenant hesitated. Evidently he hardly knew what to do. His threat to shoot the prisoner, if he refused to dance, was a threat simply, and he had not intended to do any shooting. He saw that the two who had been forced to dance were very much in earnest, however, and so he did not know what to do.

He presently decided to make a pretence of hanging the youth. This would please the two, and would cause the prisoner sufficient discomfort of body and of spirit as well, to punish him for being so stubborn as to refuse to dance.

"I think that we will hang him, instead of shooting him," the lieutenant said, after thinking awhile. "I am sure that he is a rebel, anyway, and we will be doing a good stroke of work for the king's cause when we string him up to the tree."

"That's the thing to do!" from the soldier who had been addressed as Johnson.

"Bring him out of doors!" ordered the lieutenant.

Two of the redcoats seized Dick's arms and led him out of the house.

"Goodness! This is terrible!" said the woman, when the redcoats had all left the room.

"Do you really think they will hang him, father?" the girl cried, anxiously.

"I fear so, Esther," was the reply.

"And can we do anything to save him?"

"I don't see what we can do. There are six of the redcoats. They can do as they please."

The girl looked anxious and worried, but thoughtful.

One of the redcoats stuck his head through the doorway.

"Get a rope for us, old man," he said; "and get it quickly!"

There was nothing for it but to obey, and the man said he would get a rope, and left the room and house, going out by the rear way.

He went to the stable and was soon back with a rope twelve or fifteen feet long.

This he handed to one of the redcoats, who made a running noose in one end of the rope and threw the other over a limb. It was light enough, there being a moon to enable them to see what they were doing.

The noose was placed around Dick's neck. The five of the redcoats took hold of the rope and stood ready to pull at the command from the lieutenant.

The officer stood there, looking at the prisoner a few moments, and then said:

"Pull, men!"

They at once pulled down on the rope with all their might, and Dick was lifted clear off the ground.

A wild scream broke on the night air. It was from the lips of Esther Fenton, and she ran forward, crying:

"Spare him! Oh, let him down! Don't hang him! I will dance in his place if you will let him down!"

"Let him down!" ordered the lieutenant. He did not wish to kill the young man, and this would give him a chance not to do so, and at the same time his men would have no excuse for feeling disappointed.

"Loosen the noose so that he can breathe freely," said the lieutenant.

This was done, and Dick, uninjured save for a slight choking, stood there gazing calmly and defiantly at the redcoats.

The officer turned toward Esther Fenton, who had paused near him and was looking eagerly at Dick to see if he was injured.

"Did I understand you to say that you would dance in the prisoner's stead, if we would spare his life?" the officer asked.

Johnson muttered something in a tone of disgust; but he did not venture to say anything, though he suspected that he was to be cheated out of his revenge.

"Yes, yes!" said the girl, eagerly; "you must not hang the young man, and I will dance if you will set him free."

"I can't agree to that, Miss."

"You cannot?"

"No; but I will agree not to shoot or hang him if you will dance."

"Don't do anything of the kind, miss," said Dick. "They won't dare hang me, anyway."

"I fear they will, sir."

"And you are right, miss," said the lieutenant; "but if you will dance for us we will spare the fellow's life, though I must take him to our encampment as a prisoner. It is possible that he is a rebel spy."

"I am not a rebel spy," said Dick.

"Of course you would say so," sneeringly.

"Because it is so."

"Bah! I will believe that when it is proved to be true; not before. But we will now go into the house and witness some dancing by the young lady. Bring the prisoner along, boys."

"Don't please them enough to dance for them, miss," said Dick; "it is not necessary, I assure you."

"That's all you know about it," said the lieutenant; "it is all that will save your life."

They were soon in the house, and the young officer told the girl to go ahead and dance.

"Dance your prettiest," he said; "you will find that we can appreciate good work."

Before the girl could begin dancing there came an interruption.

CHAPTER VII.

THE TABLES TURNED ONCE MORE.

Into the room strode a dozen young men with pistols in their hands, and leveled.

They were Liberty Boys, and a glad cry escaped the lips of Dick as his eyes rested upon the newcomers.

"You have just come in time!" he exclaimed.

"We are glad of that," said Bob, with a grin; then to the astonished and startled redcoats he added:

"Up with your hands, every one of you!"

The six redcoats obeyed the command. They realized that they were outnumbered and at a great disadvantage.

The only sensible thing to do was to do as he ordered.

"Up with your hands, men," said the lieutenant, sullenly. "They have the advantage and we cannot help ourselves."

The men raised their hands.

"That is the way to do—mind your superiors," said Bob, with a grin and an approving nod. "Mark, just free Dick's arms, will you?"

Mark Morrison stepped forward and freed Dick's arms.

"Now, three or four of you tie the arms of the redcoats."

This was done, and then Bob asked:

"How does it happen that we found you a prisoner in the hands of these fellows, Dick?"

The youth explained.

"So they were making the man of the house dance, were they?" remarked Bob; "and you made a couple of them dance, eh? That was good. And then some more came along and caught you napping and made a prisoner of you? Well, we have evened affairs up with them by coming along and making them prisoners."

The redcoats said nothing, but glared angrily.

Mr. Fenton and his wife and daughter were delighted by the turn affairs had taken, and they said as much. They asked the youths what they were going to do with the redcoats.

"We are going to keep them prisoners," said Dick.

"Where are you going to take us?" asked the lieutenant.

"To our encampment," replied Dick.

The British soldiers started, and looked surprised.

"To your encampment?" from the lieutenant, in an inquiring tone.

"Yes."

"Where is it?"

"About a mile from here."

"Who are you fellows, anyway?" asked the lieutenant.

"We are the fellows that caused your army so much trouble this afternoon," said Dick.

"What is that? Are you the party of rebels who fired upon us with guns three times this afternoon?"

"The same."

"What do you think of us as gunners?" asked Bob.

The redcoats did not reply, but glared sullenly.

"I think we proved pretty conclusively that we are good gunners, Bob," said Sam Sanderson.

"Yes; so we did."

"Say," said the lieutenant, "are you the fellows who are known as the Liberty Boys of '76?"

"We are," replied Dick.

Then he told the boys to lead the prisoners out of doors.

"We will be getting back to the encampment," he said.

The youths led the prisoners out, and Dick paused to talk a few minutes with the members of the Fenton family.

They thanked him for interfering on behalf of the head of the family when the two redcoats were making him dance; and he thanked the girl for what she had done in his behalf after he had been made a prisoner by the six redcoats. He declared they were even.

Then he bade them good-night and went out where the Liberty Boys and the prisoners were awaiting him.

"You take the prisoners and go to the encampment with them," he told Bob.

"What are you going to do?" Bob asked.

"I am going to take a look at the British encampment."

"Yes, and the chances are that you will get taken prisoner again."

"Oh, no; I would not have got taken prisoner this time if it hadn't been that I interfered in behalf of the man who lives here. I would have reconnoitered the British encampment and gotten back by this time."

"Well, you had better come back with us now. We will be able to find the British encampment in the morning."

"No; I will find it to-night. By the way, how came you fellows to happen upon the scene so opportunely a little while ago?"

"We heard a couple of pistol shots over in this direction, and as we were not sleepy and had nothing else to do we decided to investigate," explained Bob. "We were afraid you had gotten into trouble."

"Well, I had done so, sure enough; and I am glad you took it into your heads to come."

"So are we; well, come along, boys, and be careful not to let any of the prisoners escape."

"That's right," said Dick. "Hang on to them, now that you have got them."

"They won't get away from us," said Sam Sanderson.

The party of Liberty Boys, with the prisoners in their midst, moved up the road in the direction of the encampment, while Dick walked away in the opposite direction.

Dick was sure the British encampment must be near at hand.

He moved along at a fair pace and kept his eyes open.

Half an hour later he caught sight of campfires gleaming through the trees, and he knew that he had come upon the encampment of the enemy.

He advanced slowly and cautiously.

Presently he was near enough so that he could see the enemy and could get a very good idea of its location.

He spent half an hour reconnoitering in the vicinity

of the encampment and then made his way back a distance of a quarter of a mile and stopped to take an observation of the surrounding country.

He wished to see whether there was a high place near at hand, on top of which the Liberty Boys might plant their guns and cannonade the redcoats.

There was timber all around, and he could not see from the ground, so he climbed a tree.

It was light enough so that he could see fairly well for quite a distance.

He looked in every direction, and finally decided to go and reconnoiter a hill, which was perhaps half or three-quarters of a mile away from the British encampment.

"I believe that if we can get the guns planted on that hill we can bombard the British to good advantage," Dick said to himself.

He started to descend, but paused suddenly. From below the sound of voices came up to him.

He peered down through the branches of the trees and made out two forms standing beneath the tree.

Dick judged from the tone of their voices that they were quarreling. He could not understand all that was said, but occasionally he heard and understood a few words, and presently he heard the word "cheat" used, followed by that of "liar." Then the two began fighting.

"Hello, they're at it!" thought Dick; "I have an idea that they have been playing cards for money, and that one has accused the other of cheating. Well, let them fight, and if one kills the other, so much the better."

The two were fighting with Nature's weapons, at first, but presently one gave utterance to a gasping moan, and gasped out:

"Ah-h-h-h-h! You—have—killed—me!"

Dick peered down and saw one of the two reel and fall to the ground.

"He would have it," Dick heard the other say; "well, I must get away from here. It's lucky nobody saw us together, and that we left the encampment separately."

"Jove, I believe he has killed the other man, sure enough!" thought Dick, with a thrill of horror.

The assassin moved away and was quickly out of sight; and then Dick descended and bent down over the still form of the other.

He felt above the man's heart. It was still. The man was dead.

"Too bad!" thought the youth. "Well, I would bury him if I had a spade, but I have none, and so will have to let him lie here."

Dick moved away, and twenty minutes later was climbing the hill that he was figuring on planting the guns on.

Reaching the top of the hill, he took up a position at the foot of a huge tree and gazed down in the direction of the British encampment.

Dick could see the campfires, and so knew exactly where the encampment was.

"I think it will be possible to do good work from here," he told himself; "we will come here and plant the guns

in good positions, at any rate, and will be ready to bombard the British when morning comes."

Dick was well pleased with the work they had done the afternoon before. They had used the guns with telling effect three different times, and if they could worry the redcoats all next day they would be doing good work, indeed.

The youth was thinking deeply, and presently started to walk away in the direction of the Liberty Boys' encampment.

He had taken perhaps four steps when something struck him on the back, knocking him down with considerable force.

CHAPTER VIII.

BOMBARDING THE BRITISH.

The "something" that had struck Dick was a panther.

The beast had been in the tree all the time Dick was standing beneath the branches, but as it was right above the youth it did not jump. It waited until its intended victim was out a ways, and then hurled itself upon him.

Dick guessed what it was that had knocked him down.

He knew there were many wildcats and panthers in the timber, and his guess was that this was a panther.

He realized that he had a hard fight ahead of him, but he was not the youth to allow himself to be daunted by any prospect, no matter how blue and unpromising.

He drew his knife and leaped up. The panther, such was its momentum, had gone over Dick's form, thus leaving him free for a moment.

The next instant the brute had whirled, and now made a leap at Dick.

The Liberty Boy leaped aside, and as the panther passed him he struck it with a knife.

The blade penetrated the brute's body several inches, and elicited a fierce growl of rage and pain.

Dick bounded toward the large tree and got behind it just as the panther leaped again.

His quick movement foiled the beast, and with a snarl of rage, it whirled, after lighting beyond the tree, and gave another leap.

Dick ran around the tree, and thus got out of the brute's way.

It was a peculiar combat, the panther trying to get at Dick, and he kept slipping around to the opposite side of the tree each time the animal made its leap, and thus the brute was foiled again and again.

Dick did not like the idea of coming to close quarters with the panther if it could be avoided. He had several scratches on his person already, and he had no desire to get within reach of those needle-like claws again.

Presently Dick noted the fact that the panther seemed to be growing weak. Its leaps were not nearly so strong or so frequent.

"The thrust I gave it with the knife must have been a serious one after all," thought Dick. "The brute is bleeding to death, I think."

This was indeed the case, and presently the panther ceased its efforts to get at Dick and went away, moving with difficulty, however.

Dick could have shot the brute and put it out of its misery; but he did not want to make any noise that would attract the attention of the British; neither did he wish to risk getting close enough to the panther to give it a finishing thrust with the knife; so he decided to let it go its way and let it die at its leisure.

He drew a breath of relief when the beast had disappeared from view.

"I think I got out of that in pretty good shape," he told himself. "Had the brute not leaped too strongly and gone over me when it first knocked me down it would have torn me to pieces and I could not have helped myself."

Then he made his way down the hillside and walked in the direction of the Liberty Boys' encampment.

He passed the Fenton home, and all was dark there; the members of the family were evidently in bed.

"Esther is a pretty girl," thought Dick; "and I think that she was interested in Harry Garver when we were there to-night. He seemed to take a notion to her, too, and I am sure they would fall deeply in love with each other if they were to be thrown in each other's company a few times."

This was not likely to happen, however; at least, there did not seem to be much likelihood of it at that time.

Twenty minutes later Dick arrived at the encampment.

He found everything all right there. The prisoners were lying on blankets, their hands and feet bound.

The majority of the youths were awake, and they were glad to see Dick back among them safe and sound.

"Hello, what tore your clothes?" asked Bob, he happening to notice the torn places in his comrade's coat.

Dick told him, and exclamations escaped the lips of the youths.

"You can get into more adventures in a short space of time than any fellow I ever heard of," said Bob; "I wish I had your luck."

"You would be certainly welcome to it so far as I am concerned, Bob."

"I don't know about that," with a laugh. "I feel confident that if there were no adventures, no excitement to be found, you would very quickly tire of being a soldier."

"Perhaps so, Bob."

"I know it would be that way with me."

The youths talked awhile longer in much this same way, and then Dick said:

"The prisoners are what is worrying me. I wish to get after the British to-morrow in much the same fashion as we did this afternoon, and the prisoners would be greatly in our way. What shall we do with them?"

"String them up to a tree," said Bob, with a sly wink, for the majority of the prisoners were awake and listen-

ing to what was being said, and the youth was not averse to having a little sport at their expense.

"We could do that, of course," said Dick, with a smile; "but I am not in favor of treating prisoners of war in such a manner as you have suggested, so we will have to think of some other plan."

"Why not send them over to where the main army is encamped?" said Mark Morrison.

"I was thinking of that," said Dick, "and I judge that it is the best thing to do. We have the time, and it will be a simple matter to take the prisoners over to the main army and leave them there."

Dick named six youths to do this work, and half an hour later the little party, with the prisoners in its midst, rode out of the encampment and away.

The six youths were back again shortly after midnight, and found their comrades engaged in breaking camp.

"Where are we going?" they asked.

"To the top of a hill overlooking the British encampment," replied Dick; "we will go there and get the guns planted and be ready to bombard the enemy as soon as it is light enough so that we can see to aim the guns."

This was satisfactory to all the Liberty Boys. They were never so well satisfied as when they were in a position to strike the British a blow.

It was only about two miles to the hill in question; but it took nearly two hours to get there, for it was hard work for the horses to drag the guns up the hillside through the brush, and this way and that among the trees.

At last they reached the top of the hill and the work of putting the artillery in place was begun.

This was finished at last, and then the youths threw themselves down to rest an hour or so and catch a few winks of sleep.

They were up before daylight, however, and had perfected all their arrangements, and were waiting patiently for the sun to come up and make it light enough for them to get to work.

The horses were saddled and bridled, and those that were to drag the guns stood near, ready harnessed, and ready to be hitched to the limbers at a moment's notice.

Slowly the sun rose and made it gradually lighter. The British encampment became visible, and the youths got ready to begin work.

The weapons were loaded and the gunners took their station.

By the time that it was light enough so that the gunners could aim the field pieces effectively the British were astir in the encampment.

Dick told the gunners to sight the weapons.

"We must get to work," he said. "We will give the redcoats a surprise."

"That's what we will!" from Bob.

When they were ready they stepped back and nodded to Dick.

He took a look down into the encampment and then gave the command:

"Fire!"

The four guns were discharged almost at the same instant, and the result was one elongated report that fairly shook the earth. The noise was almost deafening.

The youths looked down into the encampment eagerly.

The balls struck within the encampment and tore through the ranks of the British, inflicting considerable damage. At least a score of the redcoats were killed and wounded.

It came to the British almost as a clap of thunder out of a clear sky.

They stared up at the hilltop in a dazed manner.

Then some of the officers recovered the use of their faculties and gave commands to the soldiers, ordering them to get ready and charge up the hillside and attack the rebels.

The redcoats seized their muskets and started in obedience to the commands.

They dashed up the slope, and had gone nearly half way up when there came the roar of the weapons again, and four cannon balls came tearing down through their ranks, killing and wounding a number.

The missiles went on down and through the encampment, doing more damage there.

Dick Slater saw that it would be impossible to load and fire again, so he gave orders for the artillery to be taken away at once.

"We will stay here and hold the enemy back until you get a good start," he said.

The youths who had charge of the artillery quickly hitched the horses to the pieces and moved away down the slope as rapidly as possible—though this was not very rapid.

"Get into position, Liberty Boys," said Dick.

The youths hastened to obey the command, and were soon ensconced behind trees, rocks and bushes.

"Now be careful," went on Dick; "take careful aim and don't pull trigger unless you are sure that you will bring down your man."

The youths said that they would remember his instructions.

"Trust us for that, Dick," said Bob. "If we only had some way of knowing which soldier to aim at, so that each man would have a different target, we could drop almost as many men as there were shots fired."

"Yes, that's so; well, do the best you can."

The redcoats were coming rapidly, and were now almost within musket shot distance.

Dick watched them closely and waited for them to get within easy range.

Presently he said:

"Aim!"

The youths leveled their muskets and took careful aim.

"Fire!" cried Dick.

The youths pulled trigger.

Crash!

The volley rang out loudly on the morning air, and fol-

lowing it went up screams and groans of pain and agony from those who had fell wounded.

Many were killed outright.

The redcoats fired a volley from their muskets, but did not inflict much damage, the Liberty Boys being so well sheltered.

Then they came on up the slope, for their commanders had ordered them to charge bayonets.

"Get out your pistols and give them a couple of volleys!" cried Dick.

The youths were already drawing their pistols, and a few moments later fired a volley, and another.

The redcoats were so close that the pistol volleys did good execution.

Quite a number of the British went down, dead and wounded.

The volleys demoralized the British somewhat, and they paused and stood hesitating.

Dick thought he saw a good chance to get in an extra blow, and he cried out:

"Up with your muskets and charge the redcoats, Liberty Boys!" he cried. "At them!"

The youths grabbed up their muskets and dashed down the slope straight toward the redcoats.

They set up a wild yell that was well calculated to disconcert the British.

"Down with the king! Long live liberty!" the youths cried.

Then they were upon the enemy, and it became a hand-to-hand conflict, with the advantage, however, all on the side of the Liberty Boys.

The British were badly demoralized, and the patriot youths attacked them with such a fury that they could not stand their ground.

They turned and fled at the top of their speed.

"Hurrah! We have put them to flight!" cried Bob Estabrook, who was nearly wild with delight.

CHAPTER IX.

THE WOUNDED LIBERTY BOY.

"Yes, but they'll be coming after us in strong force right away," said Dick; "back up the slope, everybody."

He stumbled against a wounded man as he turned to go back up the hill, and as he glanced down he gave utterance to an exclamation.

"Great guns! Harry Garver!" he cried. Then he dropped on his knees beside the wounded youth and asked, anxiously:

"Are you bad hurt, Harry?"

"I—feel—pretty—bad, Dick," was the reply. "I have—got—a bayonet—wound—in the—shoulder."

Dick was already examining the wound.

"This way, some of you boys!" he called out, and four of the youths hastened to his side.

"Bring Harry along," said Dick. "Be careful, for he is pretty badly hurt."

They carried him up to the top of the hill and laid him on the ground.

"What's to be done?" remarked Bob; "we can't carry him away on horseback as rapidly as we will be forced to go; and we can't leave him behind."

"I'll tell you what we will do," said Dick.

"What?"

"Four of the boys will carry him to the home of the Fentons. It is only about a mile. I will go along with them, and you, Bob, will have command of the Boys. Mount horses and get away in a hurry, for the British are coming in force."

"We will go now. Harry, do you think you can stand it to be carried a mile?"

"I—can—stand—anything,—Dick."

"That's the talk! Take him up, boys."

The four who had carried the wounded youth up the slope now lifted him again and followed Dick down the hillside. They were careful to keep in among the trees and bushes, and they went in such a direction as would keep them hidden from the enemy all the time.

Bob was so eager to guard the five youths and keep them from being discovered that he ordered the Liberty Boys to stand their ground and give the British a volley from their muskets before retreating.

"We will have to get away in a hurry after we fire, however," said Bob; "for I see the companies of troopers coming."

"Oh, we can get away from them all right," said Mark Morrison, confidently.

"I think so, but it will be a lively chase."

"So it will; they will be determined to catch us today."

The youths turned their attention toward the approaching redcoats. A large force, at least five hundred soldiers, was coming, and in addition at least two companies of dragoons were riding up the slope.

The youths had reloaded their muskets and were ready for business.

They waited eagerly, and when the approaching redcoats were within range the Liberty Boys leveled their muskets and took good aim.

Bob waited until the enemy had approached closer, and then gave the command to fire.

The youths fired instantly, and without waiting to see the result of the volley, and then turned and ran to where their horses were standing.

They untied the animals and leaped into the saddles and rode away down the slope as rapidly as possible.

The redcoats came running up to the top of the hill and fired a volley after the retreating youths, one or two of the youths receiving wounds that were not dangerous.

"The dragoons are the fellows we will have to look out for," said Bob to Mark Morrison.

"You are right," was the reply.

The youths knew the direction in which the Liberty

Boys who had charge of the guns had gone, and Bob decided to lead the troopers away on a wild goose chase.

"We won't go in the direction the boys have gone," he said; "if we were to do so the redcoats might capture the guns, and we don't want them to do that."

"True," agreed Mark; "we are doing such good work with the guns and having so much fun that it would be a shame for us to lose them."

"Well, we will go in a different direction and lead the enemy off on a blind chase."

"This was done. The British troopers followed the Liberty Boys, and it was evident that they determined to catch them and inflict damage upon them, if possible, for they whipped their horses unmercifully and spurred them.

The Liberty Boys had good horses, however, and while they did not use whip and spur to such an extent as did their pursuers, yet they were enabled to keep the enemy from gaining on them.

"I guess we are in for a long race," said Bob, looking back over his shoulder.

"Yes; they don't seem to show any signs of giving up the pursuit."

"Well, Dick and the boys got safely away with poor Harry, anyway; and that is the main thing."

"I hope that Harry isn't fatally injured."

"So do I. He is a fine fellow, and as brave a boy as ever handled a musket."

"So he is."

Meanwhile Dick and his four companions were making their way along at a moderate pace, the four carrying Harry Garver.

They walked as carefully as possible, but in spite of all they could they caused their comrade many a twinge of pain by making a false step, or by lifting him to get him through the underbrush.

Harry stood it like a soldier, however; and although an occasional groan was forced from his lips, he would in the very next breath tell the youths that it was nothing and that he was all right.

"Don't—mind—me," he said; "I—will—come—out—all—right."

"Of course you will," said Dick. "We are going to take you to a place where you will be well taken care of, and where you will receive every attention."

"I—know—"

"And like the idea, eh?"

"Yes."

Harry said no more, but it was evident that he was well pleased, for his face lighted up, even though it was pale and weak looking.

It took them an hour to go the mile, but they finally arrived at the Fenton home, where they were given a welcome that was hearty and sincere.

Mr. and Mrs. Fenton said that the wounded Liberty Boy could remain there until he got well, and that they would take the very best care of him.

Esther, Dick noted, had turned pale when she saw that

Harry was wounded. She seized the first opportunity she got to ask Dick whether Harry would get well.

"He will get well if he has good nursing," said Dick, watching her closely.

The girl's eyes brightened, and the color came back into her face.

"Then he will get well, Mr. Slater," she said, positively; "for he will get the best nursing that it is possible to give him."

"I was sure of that," said Dick. Then he went to work dressing Harry's wound.

Dick was an expert at this kind of work. He had done so much of it during the time that he had been in the army that he had gained as good a knowledge of surgery as was possessed by the majority of surgeons in those days.

He could usually tell, after examining a wound, whether the wounded person would get well.

This wound of Harry's was quite a severe one, but it was not necessarily fatal. It was painful, however, and would need a good deal of attention.

When Dick got through he asked Harry how he felt.

"Better," was the reply, in a weak, but unsteady voice. "I will be well and in the saddle again in a couple of weeks."

"Don't be in too big a hurry, Harry," with a smile; "of course, if this place should not prove to be a pleasant one to you, then it will be all well enough to get back to work at the earliest possible moment, but—"

"Oh, it will be pleasant here, Dick," interrupting.

"So I thought," with a smile; "well, take it easy, old fellow, and get well, but don't try to rush the matter. You have a severe wound and one that will heal slowly."

"All right, Dick."

Then Dick called the other four Liberty Boys to one side, and they discussed the situation.

They hardly knew what to do.

Their horses had been taken away by the other Liberty Boys, so they had no way of traveling, save by walking. This would not be satisfactory, so they decided to remain at the farmhouse at least till evening.

"I did not think to tell Bob to come here," said Dick; "but I feel confident that he will do so, anyway. He knows that we came here with Harry, and he will figure it out that we will stay here and wait for him."

"Likely," agreed the other youths.

When they told Mr. and Mrs. Fenton that they would remain the two were delighted, and said for them to stay as long as they wished to do so.

"We will remain until nightfall, unless my Liberty Boys get here sooner," said Dick.

Esther was glad to know that the five would remain but it was only because they were comrades of Harry Garver.

She hovered near the wounded youth, and was ready to bring water for him to drink, and when dinner time drew near she went and cooked his dinner, being careful to

bring some dainties that would tempt the appetite of even a sick person.

"I guess you will be well taken care of, Harry," said Dick, with a smile, as he saw the array of good things that had been placed before him.

"I think so, Dick," with a faint blush.

Dick then went out of doors, and as he stepped through the doorway saw a sight that filled him with pleasure. The Liberty Boys were coming up the road.

They had the artillery with them, so he knew that the entire force was there.

"Good!" he exclaimed. "The boys have succeeded in shaking the redcoats off. Now we can get after the main army again."

The other four youths came out of the house, and all five went out to the fence to welcome the party.

Scarcely had they exchanged greetings when around a bend in the road, half a mile away, came a force of British dragoons.

CHAPTER X.

DRIVING THE REDCOATS AWAY.

"Quick!" cried Dick. "Get the guns trained up the road and we will give the redcoats a reception that they are not looking for!"

This was quickly done, and the gunners took their places at the breech of each weapon and aimed the pieces carefully.

"Fire!" cried Dick.

The youths did so.

The aim of the gunners had been good. The shots went tearing right through the force of redcoats, knocking down horses and riders.

Wild yells went up from the troopers.

They lashed their horses forward at their top speed.

They were eager to get at the rebels and avenge the death of their comrades.

But they had a hard task ahead of them.

They numbered only one hundred, the British force having been divided the same as the day before, and the Liberty Boys had as strong a force as the redcoats.

This made an even affair of it—in fact, if anything, the Liberty Boys had the advantage, for they had downed a number of the British with the shots from their guns.

Meanwhile the Liberty Boys had ridden into the yard of and around Mr. Fenton's house, and now the guns were dragged through the gate and around the house, this being accomplished before the British were within musket shot distance.

Back of the Fenton house a quarter of a mile was a hill. It was not a high hill, but it would answer the purpose of the Liberty Boys. It would give them the advantage of position, and they were soon occupying the hilltop.

Here they paused and dismounted and took up their position behind trees.

"Be ready to give them a volley!" ordered Dick.

The British troopers had paused at the gate in front of Mr. Fenton's house, and had dismounted and tied their horses to a fence. This done, they moved forward, went around the house, and approached the position occupied by the Liberty Boys.

They had had sufficient experience with the Liberty Boys to understand that they would have to be careful. They advanced slowly and carefully.

They attempted to take advantage of the trees and bushes as the American soldiers were wont to do when fighting in a part of the country where this was possible; but the redcoats were not accustomed to such work, and they did not succeed very well.

Closer and closer they came, and presently they were within musket shot distance.

"Take aim, boys," said Dick. "Don't fire until you get aim on a redcoat, and when you feel sure of dropping one pull trigger."

Soon the muskets began cracking, and nearly every time one cracked a redcoat went down, dead or wounded.

The British returned the fire, but their shots were for the most part random ones, and did little or no damage.

In a fight of this kind the redcoats would come out in the end much the greater losers.

Bob voiced the situation when he said to Dick:

"Jove, old man, if they will keep up this skirmishing, sharpshooting style of warfare, we will just about wipe them all out, and without losing any of our men at that."

"I think they will see their mistake presently," replied Dick.

"But what else can they do?"

"If they wish to have any chance at all against us they should make a rush and charge right in upon us."

"Yes; but even then they would get much the worst of it."

"True; I think they would."

"But not as much the worst of it as will be the case if they keep up this style of fighting, eh?"

"No, indeed."

The redcoats at last became aware that they were taking part in a losing game, and they decided that the best thing to do would be to get away from there as quickly as possible.

The order was given to retreat, and they began moving back as rapidly as possible, and at the same time protect themselves from the bullets of the patriots.

"They're retreating, Dick!" cried Bob. "Let's charge them!"

Dick had been giving this very matter some thought, and he now shook his head.

"I think it would be better to let them go," he said. "We could kill a number of them, but they might kill several of our boys, and I am not willing to have that happen."

"All right; just as you say, Dick."

They watched the redcoats retreating, and suddenly Bob was struck by an idea.

"Let's load the guns and fire upon them when they mount and are riding away!" he cried.

"That is a good plan!" said Dick.

The guns were brought forward and loaded, and then the gunners took their places and waited.

"Wait till they mount," said Dick; "and then take aim and give it to them."

In retreating the redcoats had taken their wounded along with them, and just as they got to the Fenton home another party of the dragoons rode up. It was the other company, and there was an animated discussion between the members of the two companies.

"Say, now is the time to give it to them, Dick," said Bob, eagerly.

"Aim the guns!" he ordered.

This was done.

"Fire!" then cried Dick.

The youths obeyed.

Boom, boom, boom, boom!

The shots went right into the midst of the force of troopers.

A number were unhorsed or killed and wounded, and several horses were brought down also.

This caused consternation in the hearts of the British. They had not been expecting anything of this kind. They hastily galloped away up the road and then entered the timber.

"Hurrah!" cried Bob; "we did good work with those shots."

"Yes, we made the enemy run," said Dick.

"We killed several of them."

"Yes."

"What will the redcoats do now, Dick?"

"I don't know; we will have to keep our eyes open and be on the lookout to see what they are up to."

"So we will."

The gunners were busily engaged in reloading, so they would be in a position to fire again, if the enemy gave them the chance.

Presently a trooper rode out from among the trees and came down the road, carrying a white handkerchief.

"A flag of truce," said Bob. "He wants to speak to us, Dick."

"I suppose they want permission to look after their wounded and bury their dead."

"Likely that is it."

Dick went down the slope a ways to meet the horseman, and when they met, he asked:

"What do you want?"

"My captain has sent me to ask permission to remove our dead and wounded."

"The permission is granted."

"Very well, sir; you will not fire upon us?"

"Certainly not; we are not barbarians."

"Thank you."

The trooper rode back, and presently quite a force of British was at work, some burying the dead soldiers, while others were looking after the injured and dressing their wounds.

There were eight soldiers so badly wounded that they could not sit in the saddle, and the captain of the company asked Mr. Fenton for the loan of a team and wagon. It was granted, and the wounded men were placed on some straw in the wagon and were taken away. The force of troopers followed, and as long as they were sight of the hill on which the Liberty Boys were stationed they carried a flag of truce.

"That's what I call cowardly," said Bob, in disgust; "it was all right to have a flag of truce while they were burying the dead and looking after the wounded, but to keep it in use afterward—bah!"

"Oh, well, we can follow and give them some more shots from the guns!" said Mark Morrison.

"So we can," from Dick. "Well, let's be moving."

They were soon down at the Fenton home, and were congratulated on their good work by the patriot farmer, and by his wife and daughter.

Harry Garver was well pleased by the manner in which his comrades had got the better of the English, and he said he hoped they would be able to strike the redcoats some more blows.

"We are going to try to do so, Harry," said Dick; "and now we must be going. Good-by, and get well as quickly as you can—but don't try to get out too soon!"

"All right, Dick."

The youths all bade good-by to Harry and to the members of the Fenton family, and then they mounted their horses and rode up the road in the direction taken by the British troopers.

They went about two miles, and then they caught sight of the British from the top of a hill.

The troopers were about three-quarters of a mile distant, and were riding along behind the wagon containing the wounded soldiers.

"The cowards!" said Bob. "I believe they are keeping close to the wagon so as to keep us from firing at them with the guns."

"It won't keep us from doing so," said Dick. "If they stay near the wagon containing the wounded men it will be their own fault, not ours, if we injure some of the wounded men."

"That's so."

"Sight the guns!" said Dick, and the four gunners took up their position at the guns and aimed them in the direction of the troopers.

"Fire one shot to warn them," said Dick; "and then if they don't get away from the vicinity of the wagon begin firing to damage them."

The youths bowed, and then one aimed his gun and fired it. He did not try to hit anything, but the boom of the cannon was a warning to the redcoats that they would be fired upon next.

They began to scatter at once, and they moved to the

right and left to get in the timber. The other three guns were fired, and one of the cannon balls brought down a horse and its rider.

There were two drivers on the seat of the wagon, and they leaped down and ran and assisted the wounded man to rise. They helped him reach the wagon and get into it, after which they mounted to their seats and drove onward.

"We scattered them if we didn't do much damage," grinned Bob.

"Yes; so we did," said Dick.

"What do you think about it, Dick? Will the redcoats remain in the edge of the timber yonder and try to shoot us down if we go along there?"

"It is more than likely, Bob."

"Then we are not going to go along there?"

"Not right away."

"You are going to reconnoiter first and see if the coast is clear?"

"Yes."

"That will be the safest and best, I judge."

"So it will; you boys remain here and I will go and reconnoiter."

"Let me help you, Dick; you take one side of the road and I will take the other."

"All right."

The two leaped down and set out on their tour of investigation.

CHAPTER XI.

GOOD WORK WITH THE GUNS.

"They have gone, Dick."

"It looks that way, Bob."

"I think that they have had about all the experience with us that they care to have."

"So it would seem."

"What shall we do now?"

"Go back to where the boys are, and then come on in pursuit of the redcoats, I suppose."

"All right, that is—hello! What does this mean?"

Dick Slater and Bob Estabrook had come to the point where the troopers had entered the timber, and had looked all around for the redcoats without finding any signs of them. Then they had stepped out into the road, and the above conversation had ensued. The break in Bob's talk with the exclamation had been caused by the sound of musketry back up in the direction where the Liberty Boys had remained while the two were reconnoitering.

"I don't know what it means," said Dick, in some excitement; "unless it may be that the redcoats have doubled back and made an attack on the boys."

"Let's go back in a hurry, Dick!"

"All right."

They ran up the road at the top of their speed, and

when they were where they could get a good view of the hilltop on which they had left their comrades they saw that an engagement was in progress between the youths and the force hidden from their sight among the trees by the roadside.

As all the firing came from the left hand side of the road Dick and Bob turned aside and entered the timber on the right hand side. They made their way around and were soon with the Liberty Boys on the hilltop.

"I am glad you have come," said Mark Morrison, who was in charge during the absence of the two; "the redcoats played a trick on us."

"So I see," said Dick. "Well, it hasn't availed them anything as yet, has it?"

"No; they have wounded two or three of the boys."

"I wonder why they don't charge us?" remarked Bob.

"I guess they are afraid to do so."

"Likely."

The Liberty Boys were glad to see Dick and Bob, and they brightened up wonderfully and began working their muskets with renewed energy.

The presence of their youthful commander always inspired them to do their best.

They were doing much better work than the British troopers.

The Liberty Boys were experts at the work of sharpshooting, and that was what this engagement really was.

The redcoats had played a very shrewd trick in turning and doubling back; but they had not pushed the attack after they failed to take the rebels by surprise.

Even now their shots were becoming fewer and more desultory, and presently they ceased altogether.

"I believe they have given it up as a bad job," said Bob.

"Yes, I think so," agreed Dick.

"We had better not take it for granted that such is the case," said Sam Sanderson, as he wiped the blood from his face, a bullet having broken the skin and started the blood to flowing.

"True," agreed Dick. "We must be careful and be sure before we make any move."

"How are we to be sure?" asked Tom Fulton.

"I will go out and reconnoiter," said Dick.

"Be careful, Dick," cautioned Bob.

"I am always careful, Bob."

"You may think so, but I don't."

The youth smiled and then stole out and away, and quickly disappeared amid the trees.

He was an expert at this sort of work, and moved as silently as an Indian.

It did not take him long to learn that the British troopers had really withdrawn, taking their dead and wounded with them.

He hastened back to where the youths were and told them the news.

"What shall we do now?" asked Bob.

"I'll tell you what we will do," said Dick. "I am eager to get in another blow at the main army to-day, and

by going back up the road a couple of miles and making a wide detour we should be able to catch up with the army some time this afternoon."

"That is just the thing to do," said Bob. "Let's be moving."

They mounted and set out at once. They moved back up the road, and presently reached the home of the Fentons. As it was now noon they decided to stop at the patriot's home and take dinner, for they knew they would be welcome.

The Fentons were pleased when Dick told them that they would remain and take dinner there, and Mrs. Fenton and Esther went to work at once. They could not cook enough at once for all the Liberty Boys, but would cook all they could.

Harry Garver was eager to hear the news. He had heard the booming of the guns, and knew that the youths had been in an engagement with the enemy.

They told him all about it, and he was well pleased when he learned that the British had been beaten at every point.

"I wish I had been able to be with you," he said.

"Oh, well, you will be with us before long," said Dick.

When the Liberty Boys had eaten dinner they bade the Fentons and their wounded comrade good-by and mounted their horses and rode away.

They turned to the left at the first turn and rode in that direction a couple of miles, when they turned to the left. They were now going east, and they rode rapidly for more than three hours.

"We ought to be in sight of the British army, I should think," said Dick to Bob, who was riding beside him.

"I should say so, Dick."

"Well, we will soon know. Yonder is a hill, and from the top of it we will be able to get a good view of the surrounding country."

"So we will."

They rode onward, and in half an hour were on top of the hill in question.

It was as Dick had said. They were able to get a splendid view of the surrounding country.

The rear guard of the British army was just marching past another hill, and Dick pointed to this, and said:

"We will wait until the redcoats are out of sight, and then we will march swiftly and get to the top of that hill. The enemy will be within range, and we will give it another dose from the artillery."

"That is the thing to do," said Bob.

They waited until the rear guard of the British army was out of sight, and then they rode down the slope and across toward the other hill at as rapid a pace as possible.

They were not long in reaching the top of the hill and the guns were planted in good positions.

The British were within easy range, and Dick told the gunners to get ready for work.

The youths took their places at the guns.

"Take aim!" he ordered.

The youths sighted the pieces.

"Is all in readiness?" Dick asked.

"Yes," was the reply.

"Then fire!"

The youths obeyed.

Boom-m-m-m-m-m ! roared the weapons.

The reports all blended together, making one thunderous report that shook the earth.

The cannon balls went hurtling through the air and fell right in the midst of the soldiers constituting the rear guard of the British army.

As may well be supposed, it caused great consternation and anger in the hearts of the British. They knew at once that it was the work of the party of youths with the four pieces of artillery, and it proved to the officers and soldiers that the British troopers had not succeeded in catching the rebels, as they had set out to do.

"Load and get ready to fire again!" commanded Dick. The youths hastened to do so.

It did not take them long to get the field pieces ready for use again, and then Dick told them to sight them.

This was done, and when all was in readiness he gave the order:

"Fire!"

Again the guns boomed.

And again the balls dropped in the redcoats' midst, killing and wounding a number and arousing the anger of the rest to fever heat.

A large force was already coming back toward the hill, and Dick realized that they would have to get away in a hurry—or at least this would be necessary in the case of the boys who had charge of the guns. The rest could remain and give the enemy a volley and then escape easily enough.

"We can give them another broadside, can't we, Dick?" asked Bob, eagerly.

"I was just thinking that we could give them one more volley," said Dick. Then he gave the command to reload the guns.

This was done, and as soon as the gunners had sighted the pieces the order was given to fire.

Again they boomed, and again the missiles struck among the redcoats and did considerable damage.

A cheer went up from the throats of the Liberty Boys.

"Hurrah for the Liberty Boys' Gunners!" cried Bob. "They never miss the mark!"

The cheers were given with a will, and by the time this had been done the gunners had hitched the horses to the artillery and were ready to go.

"That's right," said Dick. "Go along. We will give the enemy a volley or two from our small arms, and will then come on and overtake you."

"Great guns! Look yonder, Bob!" he exclaimed, pointing toward the northwest.

The young commander of the Liberty Boys looked in the direction indicated and saw a force of British troopers

to the number of nearly two hundred coming toward the hill at a gallop.

"Mount, Liberty Boys!" cried Dick. "We will have to get away from here in a hurry, or we will be captured."

CHAPTER XII.

STILL AT WORK

The youths who had charge of the artillery had already started, and now the others mounted their horses and followed. They did not wait to fire a volley or two at the redcoats.

They were not long in reaching the bottom of the hill, and then they started across an open plain perhaps two miles wide. At the farther side was heavy timber, and if they could hold the pursuing troopers back till they arrived there all would be well, as they could easily hold the enemy in check after that.

The British troopers came riding furiously around the foot of the hill, and when they caught sight of the Liberty Boys they gave utterance to hoarse yells and lashed their horses to renewed exertions.

They thought that at last they would be able to get at the youths who had caused them so much trouble, and that the meeting would be on more of an equal footing than at any of the other times that they had come together.

Of course it was not the purpose of the Liberty Boys to go faster than the ones could go who had charge of the artillery, for they would not give up the guns if they could possibly avoid doing so.

The result was that the British dragoons drew nearer and nearer.

"Will they catch us by the time we get to the timber?" asked Bob.

"They will get within musket shot distance, at any rate, Bob."

"Well, our muskets will carry as far as theirs will," with a grim air.

"You are right, and I think that we will prove to be better shots than the redcoats are," said Dick. "You know we have practiced this a great deal and are capable of doing great execution."

"I know that; but they may be good shots, too."

"I don't think so; they simply level their muskets and pull trigger, trusting to luck more than to skill."

"Well, that will be the better for us."

"Yes; if they do any damage it will be by accident."

Closer and closer drew the British dragoons.

They unslung their muskets and got ready for business.

The Liberty Boys, too, began to handle their muskets in a manner which showed they were ready for action at any moment.

Suddenly the British leveled their muskets and fired a volley.

They did not take aim. Doubtless they thought it impossible to do so.

The result was that, while three Liberty Boys were wounded, no fatality occurred, as the wounds were slight ones.

"Halt!" cried Dick, in a loud, clear voice.

All of the Liberty Boys save the four who had charge of the artillery halted and whirled their horses so that their heads were toward the British.

"Charge!" cried Dick.

The youths dashed toward the redcoats, and they fired a musket volley when they were close enough to make it effective.

The redcoats were taken by surprise, and the majority brought their horses to a stop, while many whirled the animals and dashed away.

"Now with the pistols!" cried Dick.

The youths dropped the muskets, which were tied to the saddle horns with ropes, and drew pistols, which they fired quickly.

This was too much for the British, who turned and fled, leaving the Liberty Boys masters of the situation, at least temporarily.

"Now, boys, we will have time to get to the timber," cried Dick. "Away we go, and reload your muskets as we ride."

This the youths did, although it was a feat that was very hard to accomplish. They had practiced, however, and were able to do it.

They soon overtook the youths who had charge of the artillery, and then all rode along at the same pace.

The youths who had charge of the guns were exulting over the manner in which their comrades had routed the enemy.

So were the youths themselves, for that matter, and they congratulated one another.

"We made them turn and run like rabbits!" said Bob, gleefully.

"Yes; we turned the tables on them," said Dick.

"We took them by surprise," said Mark Morrison.

"Yes; they were not looking for such action on our part," said Sam Sanderson.

The redcoats were coming again now, but they had lost so much ground that they could not overtake the Liberty Boys, who reached the timber while their enemy was yet three hundred yards distant.

The youths dismounted and took up their positions behind trees and stood waiting for the British to come within range.

This the troopers did not do, for they had had enough experience with the youths so they knew that it would mean the death of a number of their comrades. So they brought their horses to a stop and remained there, talking the matter over and trying to decide what they should do.

Noting this action on the part of the British dragoons,

Dick ordered the youths to get the guns planted and loaded and give the enemy a volley.

The weapons were quickly wheeled to points of vantage, and the gunners loaded them quickly.

Just as they finished, however, the British troopers suddenly scattered and went galloping away in all directions.

"They have thought of the guns," said Bob, in a disappointed voice. "Jove, I wish they had waited a few moments."

"Well, maybe we can knock over one or two even as it is," said Dick.

"If the boys are good enough gunners to hit the red-coats while they are on the run they are all right," said Bob. "Tell them to try it, old man."

Dick gave the order, and the four youths trained the guns so they would be on the elevation, and then all four fired at the same time.

A yell went up from the Liberty Boys. Two of the balls had damaged the enemy, one striking a horse, and the other a dragoon, killing both instantly.

"Jove, those were splendid shots!" exclaimed Bob.

"They were accidents, Bob," said Dick.

"Well," scratching his head; "seeing as how it was somebody else did the shooting, we will call it an accident; but if I had done the shooting it would have been good work and not accident."

The British troopers gave utterance to angry cries, but they did not stop. They knew their two comrades were beyond the need of help and so did not feel like remaining in danger unnecessarily.

"What shall we do now, Dick?" asked Bob, when the redcoats had disappeared around the hill two miles distant.

"I hardly know, Bob," was the reply; "I will have to give the matter some thought."

Dick talked the matter over with the youths, as he often did under such circumstances, and the concensus of opinion was that it would be wise for them to stay where they were until nightfall.

"We are so close to the main British army," said Mark Morrison, "that there is a great danger that we may get into trouble if we venture out."

They remained where they were until evening, and although they kept a sharp lookout, they did not see anything more of the redcoats.

Dick decided to make a camp at this place and remain there until midnight, at any rate. He was sure that the British army was not more than six or seven miles away and the Liberty Boys could break camp along about three o'clock in the morning and reach the vicinity of and take up their position near the British encampment before daylight.

"Then we can bombard them again as we did this morning," he told Bob, with whom he was discussing the matter.

Bob thought this was a good plan, and said so.

"Jove, Dick, but we have done good work with the ar-

tillery," he said. "The boys who have charge of the weapons are good gunners, and when they fire they usually hit something."

"Yes; they are certainly all right, Bob."

The boys went into camp and proceeded to cook their suppers. About all they had to cook was corn meal, which, mixed with water and baked in the ashes, was better than cold biscuits would have been.

Some of the youths grumbled a bit, however. They wished for something in the way of fresh meat.

Finally half a dozen set out on a foraging expedition. They knew where to go to find a farmhouse, and they were not long in arriving there.

They went to the smokehouse and got some hams and rashers of bacon, and then they went to the chickenhouse and got some chickens.

Then they slipped away without having been discovered. When they got back to the encampment they were given a rousing welcome by the rest of the youths.

Soon the odor of cooking meat was in the air everywhere about, and the youths could hardly wait till the meat was done.

They ate heartily, presently, and felt that they were ready to fight the British to a finish.

They placed out sentinels at an early hour and lay down to get all the sleep possible.

They were up at two o'clock and were breaking camp.

"We will go to the vicinity of the British encampment and try to find a good place to station our guns so as to command the encampment," said Dick.

An hour later they were moving.

As it was dark they had to move slowly.

Day began to break when they had been on the road an hour, and then they could see to make their way along very nicely.

A little later they came in sight of the British encampment.

They could see it plainly, three-quarters of a mile distant.

They were on top of a sort of ridge, and Dick decided that this was the best place to open fire upon the enemy.

He gave the command and the guns were wheeled into place.

The Liberty Boys' Gunners took their places.

"Sight the guns!" ordered Dick.

The youths obeyed.

"Ready?" he asked, when the gunners stepped back.

"Ready," was the reply.

"Then fire!"

Boom, boom, boom, boom!

Again the guns roared.

And again the British had been taken by surprise.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BOMBARDMENT OF MONMOUTH.

"Well, boys, I guess we had better go back to the main army and see what they are doing."

"Yes; we seem to be unable to get close enough to the British army to do any damage, any more."

"That's so; they leave a strong force on top of every hill they pass, and we can't get there to plant our guns. We might as well go back to the main army."

"One thing is certain, Dick, we have done a lot of damage to the redcoats during the time we have been keeping after them with the artillery."

"Yes, Bob; so we have."

It was about noon of the 27th of June.

The Liberty Boys were in camp eating dinner, and were discussing the situation.

They had been after the British army a whole week now, and had inflicted considerable damage upon it; but the redcoats had at last risen up and taken such precautions as to make it impossible for the Liberty Boys to get within range with the guns, hence the talk of returning to the main patriot army.

There was considerable talk for and against the proposition of returning, but it was decided at last to do so.

"Let's make one more attempt to get some shots at the redcoats," said Bob, who was opposed to returning to the main army at present.

"We have tried several times in the last day or so, and failed, Bob," said Mark Morrison.

"Well, let's try once more."

"What do the rest of you say?" asked Dick.

"Oh, I am willing to make another attempt if Bob wants to," said one, and the others said the same.

"From what direction shall we approach the redcoats, Bob?" asked Dick.

"From straight in front of them."

"All right; we'll try it."

They mounted and set out.

They made a wide detour and were at last a mile in front of the advance guard of the British army.

"I think that the best we will be able to do will be to get some shots at the advance guard," said Dick; "and it is so scattered, always, that it is impossible to do much damage."

"Well, we will do the best we can to damage them," said Bob.

Presently the advance guard of the British army came in sight. There were about three hundred of the soldiers, and they were scattered out so that the cannon balls would not be likely to do much damage.

"You see, Bob, it is just what I expected it would be," said Dick.

"Well, maybe we can bring down a few of them," said Bob.

Dick gave the order for the gunners to aim.

This was done, and then when all was in readiness Dick gave the command:

"Fire!"

Boom, boom, boom, boom!

The reports roared out loudly.

Scattered as were the redcoats, two were hit by cannon balls and killed.

"Good!" cried Bob. "That is all right! Try it again, boys! You are certainly splendid gunners."

The guns were reloaded, and when all was in readiness they were fired again, and this time one redcoat was seen to go down.

The British soldiers were advancing as rapidly as possible, however, and Dick gave the command to retreat.

The youths who had charge of the artillery started first, and the others mounted and followed.

It happened that the British troopers were bringing up the rear, guarding the army from attack at that point, and by the time they got to the front, after hearing the firing, the Liberty Boys had got so far away that it was useless to follow them.

"We may as well let them go," said Colonel Holman. "We could gain nothing by chasing them."

The Liberty Boys went east a mile or so and then turned toward the north.

They felt sure that they would find the patriot army a few miles distant in that direction, and they were right. They caught up with the main body about four o'clock, and were given a warm welcome by the soldiers, who cheered the youths heartily when they put in an appearance.

Dick rode at once to where General Washington and some of the staff officers were riding along in a group.

He was given a warm greeting by the commander-in-chief and the officers, all of whom knew him well.

"You have got back, eh, Dick?" the commander-in-chief remarked.

"Yes, your excellency."

"What success have you had?"

"Splendid."

"You succeeded in doing considerable damage with the artillery?"

"Yes, indeed, sir."

"And how far away is the British army now?"

"About eight miles south and west from here, sir."

The commander-in-chief asked many questions, all of which Dick answered promptly. Then at last he went back and rejoined the company of Liberty Boys.

"What did the commander-in-chief say, Dick?"

"Did he seem pleased with the work we have done?"

"Did he compliment you on our good work, old man?"

Such were a few of the questions the youths asked Dick.

"The commander-in-chief is very well pleased, boys," replied Dick. "He says we have done exceedingly well."

"I think so myself," said Bob Estabrook.

General Clinton, the commander-in-chief of the British army, was not so well pleased, however. The attack on his advance guard by the force of patriot youths had aroused his anger afresh, and he scolded his officers for not having been able to capture the little party of rebels during the week just past.

The officers humbly declared that they had done the best they could, and that the party in question was hard to get at.

That evening the British army went into camp at Monmouth.

The main patriot army was about three miles back. A portion, however, was five or six miles toward the northeast.

General Washington and his staff held a council.

They discussed the situation earnestly.

It was the general belief that the time had come to make an attack on the British.

Plans were made, and when a perfect understanding had been arrived at the officers and soldiers lay down to get a good night's rest.

There would be lively work on the morrow.

The sun rose bright and clear the next morning.

The patriot army was astir, and was marching almost with the sun.

They had not been marching long when the sound of guns was heard.

The battle had commenced!

General Washington sent word for Dick to report to him.

The youth was quickly on hand.

"What is it, your excellency?" he asked, eagerly.

"I have some work for you and your Liberty Boys, Dick. I want that you shall take those four pieces of artillery and hasten to the scene of action, and do all you can to aid the patriot army until we can get there."

"Very well, sir."

Dick saluted and rode back to where the Liberty Boys were and told them to come along at once and bring the artillery.

They set out at as rapid a pace as possible.

They soon left the main army behind, and the sound of the firing in front grew louder and louder, thus proving that they were rapidly nearing the scene of action.

Presently they were upon the scene, and they took up their position on the top of a hill and opened fire on the British.

The youths did good work with the guns, and the British soon realized that if they wanted to put a stop to the havoc they would have to silence the battery.

Colonel Holman's regiment of troopers and two companies of infantry started up the slope to make an attack and try to capture the battery.

"They are coming after us, Dick," said Bob.

"So I see. Well, let them come. Tell the boys to take good aim with the cannon and mow the redcoats down."

"I will."

Bob went and spoke to the gunners, who nodded and took up their place at the guns and aimed the pieces.

The Liberty Boys had become expert gunners, and were in a position to do good work. They handled the guns like old veterans and fairly mowed the British and Hessians down.

It was a thrilling, terrible scene.

The redcoats and their Hessian allies—two companies

of Hessians having joined the rest in the charge up the hill—kept on coming.

They were brave and desperate, and were determined to capture the battery and silence the guns; if such a thing were possible.

The sun was now up quite a ways and the heat was something terrible.

The soldiers were hot and panting, and it was with difficulty that they climbed the hill.

"Jove, isn't this terrible?" said Bob, mopping his face; "if it gets much hotter at midday, as one would naturally expect, the heat will be responsible for a large number of deaths."

"Likely you are right, Bob," said Dick.

Then they turned their attention to the matter of repulsing the approaching redcoats and Hessians.

This was going to be a difficult task, indeed.

The Liberty Boys, however, felt equal to it.

On up the slope came the enemy.

Nearer and nearer it drew, and the Dick told the youths to take aim.

The guns had been in constant use, and the gunners were still at work, but the time had come to use small arms.

The Liberty Boys leveled their muskets and took aim at the advancing host.

"Fire!" cried Dick.

Crash! Roar!

The volley rang out loudly, and many of the redcoats and Hessians went down, dead and wounded.

But still their comrades came on up the slope, grimly, determinedly.

"Now with the pistols!" cried Dick. "Don't let them get too close!"

The youths already had their pistols out, and a few moments later one volley and then another were fired.

The two volleys coming so closely together caused the redcoats and Hessians to pause and falter.

"Quick! A couple more volleys!" cried Dick.

The Liberty Boys carried four pistols apiece, and they quickly drew the other two weapons and fired two more volleys.

The enemy was so close that the pistols did as good execution as would have been the case with the muskets, and the redcoats and Hessians fired a volley at random and turned and fled back down the hill.

"Hurrah!" cried Bob, waving his hat wildly. "See them run! I tell you, we are going to whip them to-day, and whip them bad, too!"

A cheer went up from the Liberty Boys.

"Down with the king!" they shouted. "Long live liberty!"

CHAPTER XIV.

WATCHING THE ENEMY.

"Well, we whipped them, sure enough!"

"So we did."

"Yes, we ran them off the field."

"True; and I feel sure that we killed and wounded a great many more of the redcoats and Hessians than our own losses amount to."

"That's what I think."

It was evening.

The sun was just going down, a dark red, glowing mass, behind the haze of smoke from the powder that had been burned that day, and the Liberty Boys were still on the hilltop, having held their position all through the battle.

And now the battle had ended and the youths were discussing the affair.

The patriot soldiers of the main army were getting ready to go into camp for the night.

Their preparations were simple, and quickly made, and then they ate their suppers, after which they went to work to bury the dead and take care of the wounded.

Two hundred and forty-five British and Hessian soldiers were found dead on the battlefield, and were given burial by the patriot soldiers along with their own dead.

The majority of the wounded British soldiers had been carried away, but some remained, and these were taken care of.

One hundred British soldiers had been captured, also, and it is thought by the best judges that the British loss in the battle of Monmouth must have been close to one thousand, while the total patriot loss was three hundred and sixty-two.

The Liberty Boys decided to remain on the hill all night, and be ready to use the guns if the British should return and make an attack.

The youths were such good gunners that they felt that they would be able to do a great deal toward repelling the enemy.

Three of the Liberty Boys had lost their lives that day, and this cast a gloom over the spirits of the rest to a certain extent. Of course they had learned to look upon such things in a philosophical manner. They knew it was not possible that they could take part in battles and none of them lose their lives; but at the same time they could not help feeling sad.

They buried their three dead comrades and then looked after the wounded.

At least a dozen of the boys were wounded, but luckily none fatally.

General Washington called a council, and as soon as supper was ended the battle was discussed at length; also, plans for their future course were laid.

Some of the officers seemed to think the British might try to make a night attack in order to get even with the patriots, but General Washington thought to the contrary.

"We thrashed them to-day in a most signal manner," he said; "and my idea is that they will be glad enough to let the matter rest."

The majority of the officers thought the same.

The commander-in-chief decided to have a watch kept

on the British, however, and not give them the least chance to take his army by surprise, and he sent for Dick Slater.

Dick was soon standing before the commander-in-chief.

"You sent for me, sir?" he asked.

"Yes, Dick; I wish to congratulate you and your Liberty Boys on the good work which you did to-day."

Dick blushed through his coating of tan.

"We did the best we knew how, sir," he said.

"Well, you helped us to win the day. It was your incessant cannonading that caused the enemy so much trouble and discomfiture, and you displayed excellent judgment in selecting the points of attack. You spoiled several attempts of the enemy to mass and make a grand assault that might have caused us considerable trouble."

"I kept a sharp lookout, sir, and whenever I saw anything of the kind going on I instructed the gunners to scatter the British and put a stop to their work."

"You certainly did well, and I thank you. And now, Dick, I have some work for you to-night."

"I shall be glad to do the work, sir."

"I want you to go and keep watch on the British, my boy. I do not think they will attempt to make a night attack on us, but they might do so, and I don't want to give them a chance to take us by surprise."

"I will get some of my Liberty Boys to help me," said Dick, "and we will keep a close watch on the enemy."

"Very well; do so."

Dick saluted and hastened away.

"Who wants to help me do some spying?" he asked, when he got back on top of the hill where the Liberty Boys were.

"I do!"

"And so do I!"

"I'll go with you, Dick."

"Let me help you."

Nearly every youth uttered an exclamation of some sort. Dick smiled.

"I can't take all of you along," he said; "so I will name four, and the rest of you will have to stay here. I hope none of you who are not chosen will feel hurt."

"Oh, no," said Mark Morrison. "We know you do everything for the best, Dick, and are satisfied to let you use your judgment in all cases."

"Thank you, Mark, and the rest of you," said Dick. "I would like to favor all of you, but as I can't, I am forced to take the ones that, for one reason and another, I deem best suited for the work in hand."

Then he named four of the youths, and after giving the rest some instructions he turned to the four, and said:

"Come, boys, we will go and get to work."

The five set out, and at the end of an hour were close to the British encampment.

They took up their position on a knoll from where they could keep watch on the enemy, and they took turns at watching.

Along toward morning Mark Morrison awoke Dick and the others, and said:

"The British are breaking camp!"

Dick took a careful survey of the encampment, and presently said:

"You are right, Mark; they are breaking camp, and I think they are getting ready to march away."

"You think that they are not going to try to attack our army, then?"

"No; my idea is that they are going to try to get away, and thus avoid another battle."

"That is the same as acknowledging that they were whipped, yesterday, eh, Dick?"

"Yes, indeed; and they certainly were whipped."

"What shall we do, Dick?" asked one.

"We will wait till the redcoats start, and then, as soon as it is certain that they are going away, we will go back to our encampment and report the matter to the commander-in-chief."

Half an hour later the British army was marching away toward the east, and then five Liberty Boys hastened back to their encampment, and Dick went to the tent occupied by the commander-in-chief and told the orderly that he had something of importance to report.

The orderly awakened the general, who got up and dressed and gave Dick an interview. He knew that Dick had something of importance to report.

When Dick told the commander-in-chief that the British had broken camp and were marching away as rapidly as possible he said that he was not greatly surprised.

"I thought it more likely that they would do this than that they would make an attack on us," he said. "The question now is, what shall we do?"

He sent his orderly to awaken the officers of his staff, and half an hour later the officers were in the tent.

General Washington told them what had taken place.

"The British are getting away as fast as possible," he said; "now, shall we follow them, or not?"

This was the question for discussion, and after considerable talk it was decided not to make any move until morning.

Next morning the patriot army set out after the British, and that afternoon learned that the enemy had taken refuge on the heights of Middletown.

Dick Slater was sent to spy on the British at night, and he brought back the information that the British position was simply impregnable.

"So long as they remain there it would be folly to try to attack them," he said.

After hearing Dick had to tell regarding the position of the British, Washington and his officers

were of the same opinion as that expressed by the Liberty Boy.

"We can only settle down here and wait till the enemy makes another move," said Washington.

They settled down to take things easy, and, there being nothing for him to do, Dick decided that he would take two or three of the Liberty Boys and go back to the home of the Fentons and see how Harry Garver was getting along.

"He may be well enough to get into the saddle again by this time," said Dick; "and in that case he may be wanting to rejoin us."

"I don't know about that part of it," said Bob, with a grin. "You haven't forgotten Esther, have you, old man?"

"No, Bob; but Harry will want to rejoin us and fight for Independence, just the same."

"I guess you are right; he is the kind of fellow to think of duty first and pleasure afterward."

"I think you are right."

Next morning Dick, accompanied by Bob and Mark, set out for the home of the Fentons.

They took Harry's horse along for him to ride, in case he was well enough to come back with them.

They arrived at the Fenton home that afternoon and were given an enthusiastic reception by the members of the patriot family, and by Harry as well, he being up and around, though not fully recovered as yet.

"Jove, I am glad to see you walking about, Harry!" said Dick, as he shook the wounded Liberty Boy by the hand.

"And I am glad to be able to walk about, too, Dick," with a smile; "and I am glad to see you boys once more. I am going to go back with you and get to work to fighting the redcoats again."

Dick saw a shadow come over the face of Esther. She grew pale, and said in a voice which trembled slightly:

"Do you think that you will be able to ride and endure the hardships of camp life, Harry? You are far from being well, you know."

"I know that, little girl," with a fond smile; "but I am well enough, and duty calls me. Of course, if I had my way, I would remain here, but I can't neglect my duty."

"I wouldn't ask you to do that, Harry," in as brave a voice as she could command; "but—I—thought that—perhaps you had—better—wait awhile—longer."

"No; I am all right, and I will go back with the boys in the morning."

The youths decided to remain over night, and they had

a very pleasant visit. Dick managed to get a chance to talk to Harry alone, and asked him if he and Esther were engaged.

"Yes, Dick," was the reply.

Dick grasped Harry's hand and shook it.

"I congratulate you, my boy," he said. "Esther is certainly a splendid girl, and she will make you a splendid wife."

"I think so, Dick."

When Dick told his two comrades the news that night, after they had gone to the room they were to occupy, they said they had expected to hear this. And they were glad of it, for they liked Harry immensely, and were glad to know that he was to be made happy.

When Harry bade Esther good-by next morning, he told her that the first thing he would do when the war ended would be to come straight to the Fenton home and be married to the girl of his choice; and this assurance made the girl very happy.

Needless to say, Harry kept his word, and they lived many years together and reared a happy family.

The four Liberty Boys were back in the patriot encampment by three o'clock, and they found everything as quiet as when they had left there the day before.

Harry was given a rousing welcome by his comrades.

THE END.

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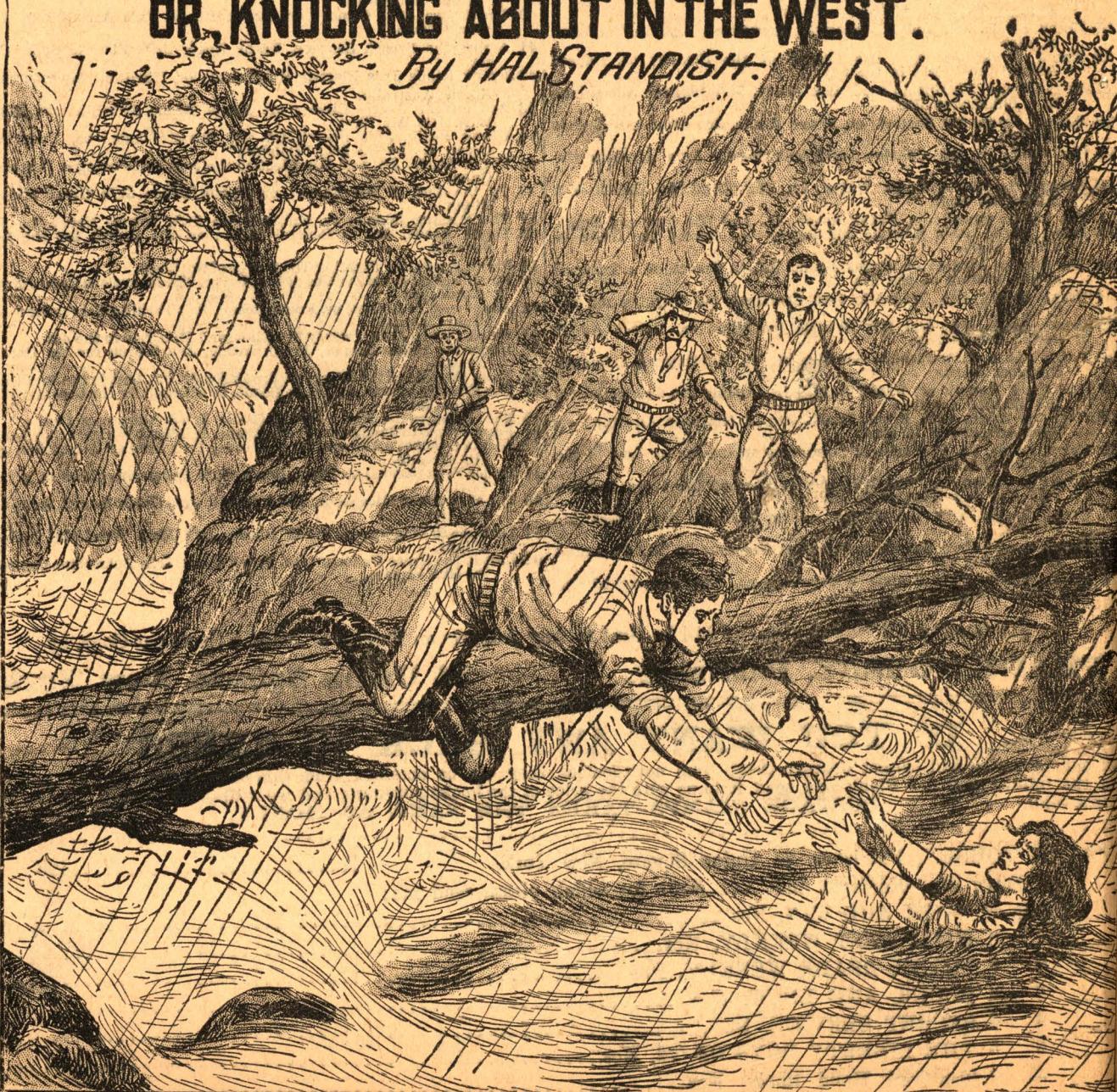
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